

**In Search of Utopia:
Performing the Lesser-Known and Unpublished
Violin Works of Ernest Bloch –
A Portfolio of Recordings, Editions and Exegesis**

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Exegesis

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
Abstract.....	iv
Declaration.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
List of Musical Examples.....	vii
List of Figures.....	ix

Exegesis

Introduction	1
Methodology.....	3
Review of Resources.....	5
Preview of CD Contents.....	9
Exegesis Structure.....	10

Chapter 1. Ernest Bloch: Establishing Context - a Biographical Overview of the Man and His Music	12
1.1 The Early Years	12
1.2 The Student Years	13
1.3 The Jewish Cycle	15
1.4 The Middle Period	18
1.5 The Final Years	12

Chapter 2. Performing Bloch	22
2.1 Developing a Performance Practice Concept Within Bloch's Violin Repertoire	22
2.1.1 Bloch as Performer	23
2.1.2 Expressivity	24
2.1.3 Finding Form	26

2.2 Understanding the Score – Editing as a Form of Research.....	28
2.2.1 Informing the Editing Process.....	28
2.2.2 Editing Issues.....	29
2.2.3 Interpretation – the Relationship Between Editor and Performer..	32
Chapter 3. The Early Unpublished Works.....	33
Background	34
3.1 The Four Early Violin Works by Bloch.....	36
3.1.1 <i>Sérénade Morceau</i>	36
3.1.2 <i>Fantaisie</i>	39
3.1.3 <i>Fantaisie-lied</i>	44
3.1.4 <i>Méditation</i>	47
3.2 Analysis of Bloch’s Markings in the Early Works.....	49
Chapter 4. The Published Violin Repertoire.....	54
4.1 <i>Sonata No. 1</i>	55
4.1.1 Comment.....	60
4.1.2 Performance.....	61
4.1.3 Manuscript Observations.....	62
4.2 <i>Mélodie</i>	63
4.3 <i>Sonata No. 2 (Poème Mystique)</i>	65
4.3.1 Manuscript Observations.....	69
4.4 <i>Nuit Exotique</i>	71
4.4.1 Dedication.....	74
4.5 <i>Abodah</i>	75
4.6 <i>Solo Suites</i>	79
4.6.1 Performance.....	84
Conclusion.....	87
Appendices.....	90
A. Notes on the Baal Shem Suite.....	90
B. Jewish Music on the Classical Stage.....	91

C. Photographs of Bloch.....	93
List of Sources.....	95
a. Books.....	95
b. Articles.....	98
c. Essays and Theses.....	101
d. Online.....	101
e. Other.....	102
f. Musical Scores.....	103
g. Discography.....	104

Abstract

This study presents a performance-based investigation of selected violin works by Swiss-American composer Ernest Bloch (1880-1959). Seven published works for solo violin and violin with piano are examined alongside four unpublished early works, which until the present study have remained unedited and relatively unknown. The results of the research are documented in three CDs that include world-premiere recordings of three works, four new scholarly editions of the seminal early works, and an exegesis that provides commentary on the project's outcomes.

Ernest Bloch was a major figure in the music world of the 20th century and contributed significantly to the violin repertoire. The 11 works included in this study – two Sonatas, two Solo Suites and a comprehensive selection of shorter works – reveal an impressive breadth and variety of styles. Yet the majority of them are rarely performed.

This study contributes the first performance-based examination of the selected works to the existing Bloch scholarship. The collected materials provide a resource for future performers and researchers of the repertoire, highlighting avenues for further investigation and, it is hoped, inspiring new interest in these important and neglected works.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Signed.....

Dated.....

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A huge thanks must go to the many people who generously brought their expertise to the project and provided crucial guidance in times of need, namely Professor Mark Carroll, Professor Charles Bodman Rae, Philip Butterss, Marguerite Foxon, and Anthony Albrecht.

To my associate artists, without whom the recordings could never have happened, I thank you deeply. Pianist Michael Ierace for your impeccable musicianship and for being as solid as a rock while I ran around chaotically. Sound engineer Lachlan Bramble, for your never-ending goodwill and positivity, and of course for your great skill with the microphones.

A very special thanks to all my family and friends, especially John, who have supported and encouraged me throughout the duration of this project. I am fortunate to have such an extraordinary support team surrounding me, and I thank each and every one of you.

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List of Musical Examples

Ex. 1 Bloch <i>Violin Sonata no. 1</i> , first movement, violin, measures 38-41.....	25
Ex. 2 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , violin, manuscript, measures 145-156.....	30
Ex. 3 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , score, manuscript measures 110-113.....	30
Ex. 4 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , score, Slattery edition, measures 110-113.....	31
Ex. 5 Bloch <i>Sérénade Morceau</i> , violin, measures 1-5.....	36
Ex. 6 Bloch <i>Sérénade Morceau</i> , score, measures 82-84.....	38
Ex. 7 Bloch <i>Mélodie</i> , violin, measure 78-81.....	38
Ex. 8 Bloch <i>String Quartet No. 5</i> , fourth movement, 1 st violin, p. 39, s. 4, measures 4-5.....	38
Ex. 9 Bloch <i>Sérénade Morceau</i> , violin, measures 63-67.....	39
Ex. 10 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , score, measures 1-2.....	40
Ex. 11 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , score, measures 7-10.....	41
Ex. 12 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , score, measures 61-65.....	41
Ex. 13 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , score, manuscript, measures 166-170.....	42
Ex. 14 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , score, manuscript, measure 102.....	43
Ex. 15 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , violin, manuscript, measure 102.....	43
Ex. 16 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , score, measures 1-6.....	44
Ex. 17 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , score, measures 43-45.....	45
Ex. 18 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , score, measures 233-236.....	46
Ex. 19 Bloch <i>Méditation</i> , score, measures 1-5.....	48
Ex. 20 Bloch <i>Méditation</i> , violin, measures 67-74.....	48
Ex. 21 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , score, manuscript, measures 1-5.....	49

Ex. 22 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , violin, manuscript, measures 1-6.....	49
Ex. 23 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , score, manuscript, measures 128-131.....	50
Ex. 24 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , violin, manuscript, measures 126-130.....	50
Ex. 25 Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , violin, manuscript, measures 1-28.....	51
Ex. 26 Bloch <i>Fantaisie</i> , violin, manuscript, measures 122-123.....	51
Ex. 27 Bloch <i>Sérénade Morceau</i> , violin, manuscript, measures 1-5.....	53
Ex. 28 Bloch <i>Sonata no. 1</i> , first movement, violin, measures 4-7.....	57
Ex. 29 Bloch <i>Sonata no. 1</i> , first movement, violin, measures 60-64.....	57
Ex. 30 Bloch <i>Sonata no. 1</i> , first movement, score, measures 75-76.....	58
Ex. 31 Bloch <i>Sonata no. 1</i> , second movement, score, measures 5-7.....	59
Ex. 32 Bloch <i>Sonata no. 1</i> , second movement, violin, measures 84-86.....	61
Ex. 33 Bloch <i>Mélodie</i> , score, measures 1-4.....	63
Ex. 34 Bloch <i>Mélodie</i> , violin, measures 1-23.....	65
Ex. 35 Bloch <i>Poème Mystique</i> , violin, measures 1-2.....	67
Ex. 36 Bloch <i>Poème Mystique</i> , violin, measures 196-205.....	67
Ex. 37 Bloch <i>Poème Mystique</i> , violin, measures 210-123.....	68
Ex. 38 Bloch <i>Poème Mystique</i> , score, measures 12-15.....	69
Ex. 39 Bloch <i>Nuit Exotique</i> , piano, measures 1-3.....	71
Ex. 40 Bloch <i>Nuit Exotique</i> , violin, measures 38-42.....	72
Ex. 41 Bloch <i>Nuit Exotique</i> , violin, measures 4-12.....	73
Ex. 42 Bloch <i>Nuit Exotique</i> , violin, measures 29-31.....	73
Ex. 43 Traditional <i>Abodah</i> Chant.....	77
Ex. 44 Bloch <i>Abodah</i> , violin, measures 7-10.....	77
Ex. 45 Bloch <i>Suite no. 1</i> , Allegro, measures 16-21.....	82
Ex. 46 Bloch <i>Suite no. 1</i> , Allegro energico, measures 67-78.....	83

Ex. 47 Bloch <i>Suite no. 2</i> , Moderato, measures 1-4.....	83
Ex. 48 Bloch <i>Suite no. 2</i> , Allegro Molto, measures 325-331.....	84

List of Figures

Figure 1. The cyclical methodology.....	4
Figure 2. Example of excessive text found in Bloch's <i>Fantaisie-lied</i>	31
Figure 3. Title pages of Bloch's early unpublished violin works.....	33
Figure 4. Bloch <i>Fantaisie-lied</i> , manuscript cover page.....	46
Figure 5. Bloch <i>Poème Mystique</i> , manuscript cover page.....	70
Figure 6. Bloch <i>Poème Mystique</i> , manuscript sketch.....	70

Introduction

The violin works of Swiss-American composer Ernest Bloch (1880–1959) are a rich and diverse contribution to the violin repertoire, yet are largely unknown. Of the eight published works for solo violin and violin with piano,¹ only one is frequently performed, the *Baal Shem Suite* for violin and piano (1923).² The majority of Bloch's violin works remain in the shadow of this popular showpiece — a relative neglect that does no justice to their compositional quality and artistic merit.

The study presented here addresses this inequity by offering a performance-based investigation of a) seven lesser-known³ published violin works by Bloch: *Sonata no. 1*,⁴ *Poème Mystique (Sonata no. 2)*,⁵ *Mélodie*,⁶ *Abodah*,⁷ *Nuit Exotique*⁸ and two *Solo Suites*⁹; and b) four early unpublished works: *Sérénade Morceau*, *Fantaisie* and *Fantaisie-lied* for violin and piano, and *Méditation* for violin and organ. The latter four works, among Bloch's earliest compositions, were written between 1897 and 1898 when he was in his late teens. The handwritten manuscripts, known only to a handful of scholars well versed in Bloch's oeuvre, are kept in the Bloch Collection at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.¹⁰ While they represent the early efforts of a developing composer, they nonetheless provide fundamental insight and essential context for later works.

¹ The *Violin Concerto* of 1938 is not included in this study.

² Ernest Bloch, *Music for Violin and Piano* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1929), 12.

³ It must be established here that the term 'lesser-known' in this study refers to those works that have not gained the same level of popularity and exposure as Bloch's *Baal Shem Suite*, and is not intended to suggest that the works are completely unknown.

⁴ Ernest Bloch, *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1922).

⁵ Ernest Bloch, *Poème Mystique for Violin and Piano* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1925).

⁶ Ernest Bloch, *Music for Violin and Piano* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1929), 6.

⁷ Ernest Bloch, *Music for Violin and Piano*, 3.

⁸ Ernest Bloch, *Music for Violin and Piano*, 8.

⁹ Ernest Bloch, *Suite No. 1 for Violin Solo* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1959).

Ernest Bloch, *Suite No. 2 for Violin Solo* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1959).

¹⁰ Library of Congress, *Ernest Bloch Collection*, 1988. Accessed May 17, 2014, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003561022/>.

Within the unassuming scores are the seeds of Bloch's future compositional mastery, revealing early influences, sounds, and styles that Bloch continued to develop in later works. Prior to the current study, these seminal works remained unedited and relatively unexamined. Only one of the four, *Fantaisie*, has ever been recorded.¹¹

The handwritten manuscripts of the four early works contain numerous mistakes, miscellaneous markings, and inconsistencies. Therefore, a new opportunity presented itself early in the research process: to take on the role of editor as well as performer/researcher. The goal of the editorial process, discussed further in Chapter 2, was to create a comprehensive, concise catalogue of editions with an emphasis on clarity and accessibility for practical performance purposes, while staying as true as possible to the original manuscripts. This proved to be a challenging but enlightening process that ultimately exerted a crucial influence over any objective examination of the works. Through this highly detailed interaction with the scores, many important discoveries were made. Hidden within the manuscripts is a key resource for performers: Bloch's own fingerings, articulations, and various performance markings — a direct insight into the performance style and process of the composer. Such markings, reflecting Bloch's Franco-Belgian violin schooling, provide clues to the performance practices of these early works, and in so doing establish a basis upon which to build a performance approach to much of his later violin repertoire.

With the inclusion of the four early works, this study adds to the broad timeline and range of violin repertoire spanning the full spectrum of Bloch's compositional career. The unpublished works were among Bloch's first complete compositions, while his last, the *Solo Suites*, were written during his final reclusive years on the coast of Oregon. Each phase of Bloch's compositional metamorphosis is represented in these works, from the use of traditional folk melodies and Jewish motifs, to neoclassical forms and even hints of atonality.

¹¹ Hyman Bress, violin performance of "Fantaisie," by Ernest Bloch, recorded 1964, with Charles Reiner, on *Violin Works of Ernest Bloch*, Folkways Records FM 3357, 33⅓ rpm.

Bloch's violin repertoire is not for the faint-hearted. The aspiring performer is presented with multiple challenges. The works are technically demanding and require virtuosity in both technique and expressivity. Bloch's compositional style changed drastically throughout his lifetime — no two pieces can be approached in the same way. Even the two *Violin Sonatas* are worlds apart in style. The first, written in 1920, is an aggravated work full of angst and rhythmic impulse. The second, by contrast, is a serene portrayal of 'Utopia'.¹² Bloch's two *Solo Suites*, dedicated to Yehudi Menuhin, present an entirely different sound world, deeply rooted in the tradition and style of J.S. Bach, while the shorter works, such as *Mélodie* and *Abodah*, are akin to musical miniatures that showcase the different sounds and textures Bloch cleverly interwove into the fabric of his music.

Methodology

The compositional variety and metamorphosis of Bloch's violin works is explored using both analytical and practice-led methodologies. The phenomenological research approach described by Holmes and Holmes in their article, "The performer's experience: a case for using qualitative (phenomenological) methodologies in music performance research" (2013), provides a useful methodological guide.¹³ A combined approach of empirical and qualitative research, with performance practice at its core, allows for in-depth understanding and analysis far beyond the restrictions of a quantitative approach.

Central to this study's methodology is an exploration of the relationship and dynamic between the early unpublished works and the published mature works of Bloch. The approach taken here informs the following areas of inquiry:

1. What is the place of these early works in Bloch's oeuvre?
2. What can be learned about Bloch and the development of his style from these early works?

¹² This refers to a marking found on the original manuscript. See Chapter 4.3.1 for further detail.

¹³ Patricia Holmes and Christopher Holmes, "The Performer's Experience: A case for using qualitative (phenomenological) methodologies in music performance research," *Musicae Scientiae*, Vol. 17 Issue 1 (2013): 72-78.

3. To what extent has the editing and performance of the unpublished works been shaped by exposure to the established repertoire?
4. Conversely, how has the approach to the published repertoire been informed by the study, editing and performance of the early works?

Underlying these research questions are two broad areas of inquiry:

1. What is Bloch's place in the history of Western classical music from the 19th and 20th centuries?
2. Why have many of his works been overlooked?

The findings reinforce the cyclical nature of research of this kind, which sees every new step and subsequent discovery informed by earlier findings. This approach is supported by various practice-led research sources, such as Jane W. Davidson's "Practice-based Music Research: Lessons from a Researcher's Personal History" (2016), in which the author describes "...the action research cycle".¹⁴ The referential process of the study is represented in Figure 1, which maps the duality of Bloch's published and unpublished works against the primary research tasks undertaken.

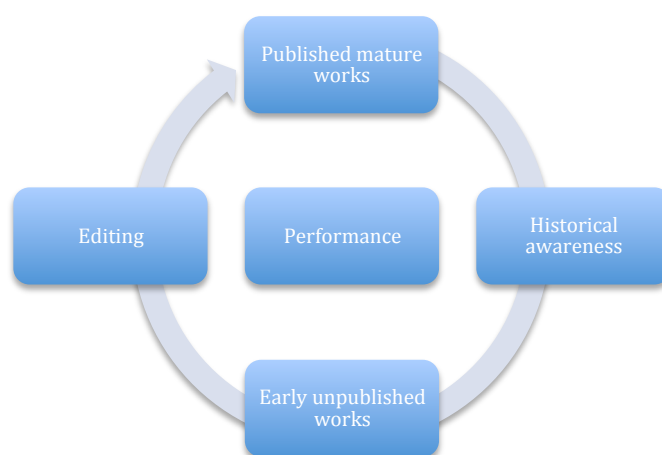


Figure 1. The cyclical methodology

¹⁴ Jane Davidson, "Practice-based Music Research: Lessons from a Researcher's Personal History," in *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice*, ed. Mine Dogantan-Dack (New York: Routledge, 2016), 101.

The above integrated methodology situates performance at its core, in the sense that archival research informs performance choices, which in turn shape historical awareness and understanding. As such, the historical past and the creative present play equal roles in the final performance outcomes.

To that end, a threefold approach was adopted for the performance preparation:

- 1) the works were examined in their historical context;
- 2) editorial choices were considered and applied; and
- 3) this highly developed understanding of the works was realised through performance.

This approach establishes reciprocity between composer, editor, and performer. The following exegesis documents this approach and demonstrates in detail the inherent decision-making demanded by practice-led research.

Review of Resources

Bloch's violin works, though seldom performed,¹⁵ have been recorded by a number of contemporary performers, including Donald Weilerstein,¹⁶ František Novotný,¹⁷ Latica Honda-Rosenberg,¹⁸ and Hagai Shaham.¹⁹ The recordings are commendable and of the highest quality, representing a modern performance approach focused on accuracy and cleanness. A selection of recordings by Yehudi Menuhin, Hyman Bress, Rafael Druian, Isaac Stern, Jascha Heifetz, Joseph Szigeti and others, provide historical insight, revealing interpretations influenced by close or direct contact with the composer and the in-vogue playing styles of the

¹⁵ It should be noted that due to Bloch's strong presence in the U.S. there is a relatively well established tradition of performing and recording his repertoire there compared to many other countries. This comment refers to a more general worldwide neglect of the repertoire.

¹⁶ Ernest Bloch, *Complete Music for Violin and Piano*, with the Weilerstein Duo, recorded April and August, 1985, Arabesque Recordings Z6606, 1989, 2 compact disks.

¹⁷ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Works*, with František Novotný, Serguei Milstein, and the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Tomáš Netopil, recorded March - June, 2007, Radioservis CR0439-2, 2009, 2 compact disks.

¹⁸ Ernest Bloch, *Complete Works for Violin and Piano*, with Latica Honda-Rosenberg and Avner Arad, recorded 2001, Oehms Classics OC255, 2010, 2 compact disks.

¹⁹ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, recorded February, 2004, Hyperion CDA67439, 2005, 1 compact disk.

time. These include: Josef Gingold playing the *Violin Sonata no. 1*,²⁰ Yehudi Menuhin playing *Abodah*,²¹ *Nigun*²² and the two *Solo Suites*,²³ and Joseph Szigeti playing the *Violin Sonata no. 1*,²⁴ *Nigun*²⁵ (the first recording of Bloch's music) and the *Violin Concerto*.²⁶ Menuhin and Szigeti had extensive personal contact with Bloch throughout their lives and were the dedicatees of many of his violin works. Both became lifelong champions of Bloch's music, presenting world premiere performances in Europe and America. In 1964, Hyman Bress recorded the early work *Fantaisie*.²⁷ This recording is curious, as the score of *Fantaisie*, along with many early manuscripts and a host of other materials, was gifted by Bloch to the Library of Congress in 1925, with the instruction that they were not to be made available to the public until 25 years after his death. There is no information on how Bress gained access to the score for this recording only five years after Bloch's death. However, Bloch's daughter, Suzanne Bloch, wrote the liner notes for the recording, indicating her permission and support.

The scholarly writings and research of Alexander Knapp and David Kushner have provided crucial guidance for this study. Knapp's extensive list of books and

²⁰ Josef Gingold, violin performance of "Violin Sonata no. 1," by Ernest Bloch, recorded January, 1938, with Beryl Rubenstein, on *The artistry of Josef Gingold*, ENHARMONIC 03-015, 2011, 2 compact disks.

²¹ Yehudi Menuhin, violin performance of "Abodah," by Ernest Bloch, recorded March 14, 1939, with Hendrick Endt, on *The Menuhin Century, The Historic Recordings*, Warner Classics 0825646777051, 2016, 18 compact disks.

²² Yehudi Menuhin, violin performance of "Nigun," by Ernest Bloch, recorded February 12, 1929, with Louis Persinger, on *The Young Menuhin – The Early Victor Recordings*, Biddulph Records B000001ZEQ, 1994, 1 compact disk.

Yehudi Menuhin, violin performance of "Nigun," by Ernest Bloch, recorded November 16-17, 1945, with Abram Makarov, on *The Menuhin Century, The Historic Recordings*, Warner Classics 0825646777051, 2016, 18 compact disks.

²³ Yehudi Menuhin, *Bloch: Deux Suites, Bartok: Sonata*, with Yehudi Menuhin, recorded January-February 1974 and April 1975, EMI 2C 069-02874, 1977, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm.

²⁴ Joseph Szigeti, violin performance of "Violin Sonata no. 1," by Ernest Bloch, recorded 1956, with Carlo Bussotti, on *Joseph Szigeti - A Centenary Tribute*, Music & Arts MACD4720, 2011, 4 compact disks.

²⁵ Joseph Szigeti, violin performance of "Nigun," by Ernest Bloch, recorded July 5, 1926, with Kurt Ruhrseitz, on *Baal Shem (Three Pictures of Chassidic Life)*, Columbia D1557, 78 rpm.

²⁶ Joseph Szigeti, violin performance of "Violin Concerto," by Ernest Bloch, recorded March 22-23, 1939, with the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra, conducted by Charles Munch, on *Great Violinists – Szigeti*, Naxos 8.110973, 2003, 1 compact disk.

²⁷ Hyman Bress, violin performance of "Fantaisie," by Ernest Bloch, recorded 1964, with Charles Reiner, on *Violin Works of Ernest Bloch*, Folkway Records FM 3357, 1964, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm.

articles covers topics ranging from “The Life and Music of Ernest Bloch”,²⁸ through to “The Jewishness of Bloch: Subconscious or Conscious?”²⁹ His writings, including the recently published *Ernest Bloch Studies*,³⁰ are an invaluable resource, especially for those interested in the Jewish aspects of Bloch’s life and works. Kushner’s long-term study of Bloch has resulted in many pivotal writings, namely, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*³¹ and *Ernest Bloch: a Guide to Research*.³² These, along with a number of smaller studies, such as “Ernest Bloch’s America”³³ and “The Jewish Works of Ernest Bloch”,³⁴ offer extensive biographical information along with analysis and commentary on a wide range of Bloch’s works, including brief mention of the early unpublished works.³⁵ Robert Strassburg’s *Ernest Bloch: Voice in the Wilderness*³⁶ and Mary Tibaldi Chiesa’s *Ernest Bloch*³⁷ provide general overviews of Bloch’s life and works, although both are somewhat dated. Bloch’s daughter, Suzanne, was very active in preserving her father’s legacy, and her writings and collected materials are key resources for any study of Bloch, in particular *ERNEST BLOCH: Creative Spirit, a Program Source Book*.³⁸ Repertoire-specific studies are scarcer, though a small number of Bloch’s works have endured extensive analysis. Works such as *Schelomo, Hebraique Rhapsody for Solo Cello and Orchestra* (1916), have been the basis of a number of studies, particularly by authors seeking to ascertain what is, or is not, genuinely ‘Jewish’ in Bloch’s music.³⁹ Joshua Friedlander’s doctoral study of Bloch’s *Violin Concerto* (1938), “The Cultural Influences of Ernest Bloch’s Violin Concerto”, makes poignant observations about the Native American, Judaic,

²⁸ Alexander Knapp, “The Life and Music of Ernest Bloch,” *The Jewish Quarterly* (1980): 26-30.

²⁹ Alexander Knapp, “The Jewishness of Bloch: Subconscious or Conscious?” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 97 (1970-1971): 99-112.

³⁰ Alexander Knapp and Norman Solomon, *Ernest Bloch Studies* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017).

³¹ David Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001).

³² David Kushner, *Ernest Bloch: a Guide to Research* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1988).

³³ David Kushner, “Ernest Bloch’s America,” *Currents in Musical Thought*, vol. 2 (1993): 125-141.

³⁴ David Kushner, “The Jewish Works of Ernest Bloch,” *Journal of Synagogue Music*, vol. 14 no. 1 (June 1968): 28-41.

³⁵ See List of Sources for a more extensive list of writing by these authors.

³⁶ Robert Strassburg, *Ernest Bloch: Voice in the Wilderness* (Las Angeles: The Trident Shop, 1977).

³⁷ Mary Tibaldi Chiesa, *Ernest Bloch* (Turin: G. B. Paravia, 1933).

³⁸ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH: Creative Spirit, a Program Source Book* (New York: Jewish Music Council of the National Jewish Welfare Board, 1976).

³⁹ Such as: Klara Moricz, “Sensuous pagans and Righteous Jews: Changing Concepts of Jewish Identity in Ernest Bloch’s Jezebel and Schelomo,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54, no. 3 (2001).

French, and German influences in the concerto. The smaller violin works, however, remain generally little known or discussed. The majority of writings on this topic appear in sources from Bloch's time in the form of reviews, program notes, and newspaper and magazine articles. The most extensive study to date, Edward Raditz's PhD of 1975, "The Analysis and Interpretation of the Violin and Piano Works of Ernest Bloch",⁴⁰ uses Schenkerian analysis to examine the harmonic and thematic structure of the works. While this study provides many useful points, it is lacking an in-depth discussion of the background and context of the works and how best to develop a performance practice concept within them. The *Solo Suites* are also missing from Raditz's study, as are the four early works.

Key resources were provided by the University of Adelaide, the British Library, the Jewish Music Institute in London, the Foyle Menuhin Archive at the Royal Academy of Music in London, the San Francisco Conservatory, the University of California in Berkeley, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. These institutions allowed access to archives containing original manuscripts, reviews, photographs, letters and correspondences, articles, and other miscellaneous writings.⁴¹ The Bloch Archives at the Library of Congress contain an extensive collection of original manuscripts, including numerous sketches and drafts scribbled in notebooks and on scrap paper. These sketches reveal the compositional gestation of several of Bloch's works, from the development of the first penciled theme through to the final handwritten version set in ink for the publisher. Discoveries made through first hand examination of these handwritten manuscripts are discussed in detail throughout the exegesis.⁴²

⁴⁰ Edward Raditz, "The Analysis and Interpretation of the Violin and Piano Works of Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)" (PhD thesis, New York University, 1975).

⁴¹ Among these were several documents out of print, damaged or incomplete, such as a draft biography containing copious handwritten revisions from Bloch. Many of these documents contain incomplete referencing information, and so where possible will be cited by their location in the Library of Congress Archives.

⁴² "...Access to scores in their manuscript and published forms, correspondence, memorabilia, and secondary sources of many varieties are, of course, central to a serious study of a composer and his music." David Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 144.

Preview of CD Contents

Three CD recordings and four new editions form the core of this submission (Volume One, Parts A and B). Each edition comes with an extensive critical commentary on editorial decisions, and scans of the facsimiles for reference. The recordings, including three world premieres, are the culmination of the ongoing research and editorial practices.

CD 1 contains the four unpublished works by Bloch: *Sérénade Morceau**, *Fantaisie*, *Méditation** and *Fantaisie-lied**.⁴³ They are paired with two short later works by Bloch, *Mélodie* and *Nuit Exotique*, and two works for violin and piano by Fauré, *Berceuse* Op. 16 and *Morceau de lecture*.⁴⁴ The Fauré pieces were selected to contextualise the surrounding works and represent an element of the sound-world of Bloch's early studies. The Fauré edition used in performance was created by Roy Howat, whose editorial method and style provided a guide for the editing process in this study.

CD 2 contains: Bloch's *Baal Shem Suite*, *Abodah*, and the two *Solo Suites*; Ravel's *Kaddisch*; and a solo violin version of a traditional Yom Kippur *Kol Nidre* melody. Ravel's *Kaddisch* is included as an example of another composer, familiar to Bloch, who experimented with Jewish themes. The Yom Kippur melody is used to set the scene for *Abodah* and the *Baal Shem Suite*, the only strongly Jewish-themed works in this study.

CD 3 contains Bloch's *Violin Sonata no. 1* and *Poème Mystique* (often referred to as the *Sonata no. 2*). The two most substantial works in this study have been paired in this recording because of a marking discovered on the manuscript of *Poème Mystique* that expresses Bloch's desire for the two works to be performed together. This finding is discussed further in Chapter 4.3.1.

⁴³ World premiere recordings are indicated by an asterisk.

⁴⁴ Faure, Gabriel. *Anthology of Original Pieces for Violin and Piano*. London: Peters Edition, 1999.

It is important to note that the Fauré and Ravel works, *Baal Shem Suite*,⁴⁵ and *Kol Nidre* melody are not discussed in the following exegesis as they do not fall into the category of ‘lesser-known’ violin works by Bloch, but instead provide relevant and related listening material. For reference, scores of all repertoire performed can be found on CD 4, at the end of this volume.

Exegesis Structure

The exegesis documents the theoretical, historical and practical considerations that have combined to shape the performance outcomes of the project — the CD recordings. **Chapter 1** outlines Bloch’s life and works, from his early education through to his final works written in Agate Beach, Oregon. **Chapter 2** chronicles the development of a performance practice concept within Bloch’s violin repertoire. It includes descriptions of information available to guide interpretation, and the editorial methodology and process. **Chapter 3** focuses on Bloch’s early unpublished works, which are contextualised and analysed. It centres on what these pieces reveal about the evolution of Bloch’s compositional voice, and how to best apply this knowledge to his later works. The chapter includes analysis of Bloch’s fingerings and other expressive markings found in the scores. **Chapter 4** examines seven published violin works by Bloch, according to a similar intellectual framework. It includes discussion of context, analysis, commentary, manuscript observations, and relevant points on performance and interpretation, as informed by previous chapters. The **Conclusion** summarises the discoveries and insights gained through the study and reflects on reasons why the violin repertoire of Bloch has been overlooked for so long.

Through examination of a broad cross-section of Ernest Bloch’s violin repertoire, the collected materials presented here address the gap in the discipline through the long-time neglect of all but a few of his works, and provide a critical resource for future performers and researchers. The following exegesis, new recordings, and four world-first editions of the seminal early works are unified by the

⁴⁵ A short note on the *Baal Shem Suite* is available in Appendices A.

common aim of advancing the knowledge base of Bloch's lesser-known violin repertoire. Bloch's contribution to the music world of the 20th century was significant. He was an award-winning composer, a teacher, a philosopher and even a photographer — truly “one of the most original and challenging American composers of the 20th century”.⁴⁶ This study demonstrates that Bloch's violin works are complex masterpieces, deserving of a definitive place in the violin repertoire.

⁴⁶ Alexander Knapp, “Bloch in the USA,” *Ernest Bloch Legacy*, September 2007, accessed May 20, 2014, http://www.ernestbloch.org/home.cfm?dir_cat=89732.

Chapter 1

1. Ernest Bloch: Establishing Context – a Biographical Overview of the Man and His Music.

In the world of Bloch's imagination the voices seem forever striving to go beyond traditional limitations: to mount not into the treble but the stratosphere; to descend not into the bass but the Stygian depths; to expand the proportions of form; to burst the very seams of dimension itself.⁴⁷

John Hastings

The extraordinary life and works of Ernest Bloch, spanning 79 years and crossing many countries, continually pushed the boundaries of traditional limitations. His was a life of great successes, bitter failures, religious ambiguity, struggles with racial identity, philosophical ponderings, and an immensely human expression of life portrayed through music. This chapter, through discussion of these elements, establishes the historical background and context of the violin works that form the core of this study, providing the foundation upon which to base a performance practice approach.

1.1 The Early Years

Bloch was born in 1880 in Geneva, Switzerland. His father, an official in the Jewish community of Lengnau, was a purveyor of tourist goods, and his grandfather was a hazzan, or cantor. In 1893, Bloch completed his Bar Mitzvah, and while his Jewish roots were of minimal consequence to him at the time, "(he) did gain from the experience ... an absorption of the aura, or essence, of this rite of passage".⁴⁸ The musical sounds of his childhood included his father humming Hebraic melodies,⁴⁹ Swiss folk tunes, and Salon Music played on the piano by his

⁴⁷ John Hastings, "Ernest Bloch and Modern Music," *Menorah Journal*, vol. 36 (1948): 214.

⁴⁸ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 13.

⁴⁹ In a letter to Henry Minsky, Bloch wrote: "...my father loved music and had a fine taste...and often sang Hebrew melodies – which impressed me deeply – One of them is included in

sister Loulette. This was enough to ignite his early interest in musical studies, and his original toy flute quickly progressed to a violin and tuition with Albert Goss. Later in life, Bloch recalled a charming memory of himself as an eleven-year old writing a vow on a leaf and performing a ceremony, proclaiming his lifelong wish to “compose music that would bring peace and happiness to mankind.”⁵⁰ Bloch came to resent the frequent telling of this story in the various biographies written about him, considering it an irrelevant detail in his life.⁵¹ Nonetheless, he was true to these words until his final year of life in 1959.

1.2 The Student Years

Bloch’s studies introduced him to many countries and leading figures in the musical world of the time. Dalcroze, Ysaÿe, Schörg, Rasse, Knorr, Thuille, Enescu and Debussy, among others,⁵² brought new sounds and ideas to the developing mind of the young composer. His compositional talent began to flourish during his violin studies in Brussels with Eugène Ysaÿe. Impressed by his student’s small compositional offerings, Ysaÿe encouraged Bloch to pursue “... the thorny path of a composer instead of becoming just “another” violinist.”⁵³ During this period, he composed the four short works for violin, which are explored fully in Chapter 3.

As his composition studies continued to develop and take shape, so too did the works he composed. His exposure to many and varied mentors, musical scenes and styles resulted in compositions that were vastly different from one another.

Schelomo, in memory of my father...” Robert Strassburg, *Ernest Bloch: Voice in the Wilderness* (Las Angeles: The Trident Shop, 1977), 6.

⁵⁰ Robert Strassburg, *Ernest Bloch Voice in the Wilderness*, 5.

⁵¹ Reference taken from a draft biography of Bloch by Mr. William R. Lawson, dated May 14, 1941, with handwritten revisions by Bloch. This document, kept at the Bloch Collection in the Library of Congress, includes many illuminating comments from the composer, including a comment on the overuse of the above story and a defense of the quality of his early works. William R. Lawson, *Draft Biography of Ernest Bloch*, May 14, 1941 (Bloch Collection, LOC).

⁵² “He was also a welcome and frequent guest in Ysaÿe’s salon, where he became acquainted with some of Europe’s most important instrumentalists and affluent devotees of music. As a consequence, he had the opportunity of examining the scores and hearing the music of some of Ysaÿe’s closest friends, among them César Franck, Claude Debussy, Camille Saint-Saens, and Gabriel Fauré.” Strassburg, *Voice in the Wilderness*, 10.

⁵³ Joseph Szigeti, *With String Attached, Reminiscences and Reflections* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1947), 120.

During this time of creative exploration, Bloch wrote his first full-scale symphony, the *Symphony in C-sharp minor* (1901-2), written primarily in the Germanic School style, but with clear hints of the Franco-Belgian sounds he previously favoured. A multitude of musical ideas permeate the *Symphony*, reminiscent of the sound world of Strauss. Bloch described the work as follows:

The work represents me as I was at twenty-one, with my struggles – already – my hopes, my joys, my despairs. I only tried to express myself simply, sincerely, without looking for originality, harmonically or orchestrally ... The work has probably the qualities and defects of youth – I am neither completely myself, nor completely alone in it. I had just finished my preparatory music studies and was ready to begin the real studies about life – about everything.⁵⁴

The works that followed the *Symphony* reveal an entirely different set of influences. *Hiver-Printemps* (1904-5), written shortly after the *Symphony* and originally conceived as a *Poem* for violin dedicated to Eugene Ysaÿe,⁵⁵ contains notable impressionistic colours. A manuscript of the original *Poem* can be found in the Bloch Archives at the Library of Congress.⁵⁶ Soon after *Hiver-Printemps*, the epic drama *Macbeth* (1904-9) was written in collaboration with his long-time friend Edmond Fleg, reflecting the grandeur of Wagner and with hints of the sound world of Mussorgsky's *Boris Gudanov* (1868-1873).⁵⁷ During this period Bloch also became acquainted with Debussy, and was exposed to the music of Mahler, Enescu and many other composers he admired greatly. This was a period of exploration and discovery for Bloch. His resulting works, in a vast array of styles, reveal a skilled composer with an in-depth understanding of his craft and an extensive imagination. Ernest Bloch was entering the musical world of the 20th century as "... a musical personality with whom the artistic world would have to reckon."⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 19-20.

⁵⁵ Szigeti, *With String Attached*, 119-120.

⁵⁶ LOC, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003561022/>.

⁵⁷ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 4.

⁵⁸ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 19.

1.3 The Jewish Cycle

The next period in Bloch's life saw great changes in the music he composed. His attempts to establish himself in the European scene produced mixed results, and with a growing family to support, he returned to Geneva to work for his father's business. Feeling artistically lost and in need of a new musical direction, he began to look toward his Jewish roots for creative inspiration. The result was an incredible outpouring of impassioned works, which endure as Bloch's most well-known and loved compositions. The 'Jewish Cycle' was born, and of it Bloch wrote:

There will be Jewish rhapsodies for orchestra, Jewish poems, dances mainly, poems for voices ... All my musical Bible shall come, and I would let sing in me these secular chants where will vibrate all the Jewish soul in what it has profoundly national and profoundly human.⁵⁹

Works written during the years 1911-1916 include: *Three Jewish Poems* for orchestra (1913), *Prelude and Psalms 114 and 137* for Soprano and Orchestra (1912-14), *Psalm 22* for Baritone and orchestra (1914), *Symphony Israel* (1912-16) and *Schelomo* for cello and orchestra (1915-16). While the 'Jewish Cycle' ended in 1916, many of his later works continued to include 'Jewish' material, such as the *Baal Shem Suite* for violin and piano (1923), *Abodah* for violin and piano (1929), and the *Suite Hebraique* for viola and piano (1951).

In the works of the 'Jewish Cycle', Bloch rarely employed specifically Judaic thematic material, yet there are distinct qualities that make these works look and sound 'Jewish'. Some have Biblical titles, such as *Schelomo*, or King Solomon. Many melodies contain similarities to the Shofar call, with repeated note patterns accented near the end of a measure, and numerous trumpet and horn calls. The more rhapsodic moments create a chant-like character, while the exotic scales and rapid changes of metre, tempo and mood seem to emulate the Talmudic prose.⁶⁰ These works also heavily feature augmented seconds, along

⁵⁹ Strassburg, *Voice in the Wilderness*, 28.

⁶⁰ Guido M. Gatti and Theodore Baker, "Ernest Bloch," *The Musical Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (Jan 1921): 32.

with frequent use of open fourths and fifths. While none of these techniques can be described as specifically 'Jewish', they do create a pseudo-Hebraic atmosphere.⁶¹ More 'authentic' elements include the Davidic text used in the *Prelude and Two Psalms* (1914), and melodic quotations from the 'Song of Songs' in the symphonic work *Israel* (1916).

The works from Bloch's 'Jewish Cycle' are his most played and discussed. To this day they are the topic of much debate. David Kushner writes:

At last, as if through a revelation, his quest for a mode of expression unique unto himself manifested itself in a style so personal and so original that the world of music was compelled to pay heed. Bloch created a 'Jewish Cycle,' a series of biblically inspired epics resplendent in orchestral color and highly charged with emotive power ... They remain the bulwark of the corpus upon which the composer's early fame rests, but they also resulted in that unfortunate appellation 'Jewish composer,' which has clung stubbornly to Bloch like an irradicable badge and which has created an erroneous and delimiting assessment of his oeuvre as a whole.⁶²

It was not only Bloch admirers who tended to associate him entirely with this period. Critics of the music from the 'Jewish Cycle' were inclined to dismiss his complete repertoire, including works written with no Jewish content at all. One critic, Klara Moricz, described Bloch as:

An outsider among both Jews and gentiles, Bloch's descent to a barbaric pre-linguistic condition ... turned the specific expression of racial identity into a gesture of generic barbarism ... Bloch would be permanently confined to the ghetto he had constructed for himself on a foundation of racial theory.⁶³

⁶¹ David Kushner, "Bloch, Ernest," In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 68.

⁶² Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 4-5.

⁶³ Malcolm Troup, "Book Review – Western Music and Race," *IEBS Newsletter*, no. 1 (2009): 3.

Bloch's own response to this ongoing debate provides great insight into his desire to write music as an expression of the Jewish soul:

In a work that is called "Jewish" ... I did not look upon the problem from the outside ... No! I made myself listen to a voice from within, profound, intimate, urgent, passionate, an instinct, far more than a cut and dry meaning, a voice that appeared to me from a great distance, from a time before me, before my parents ... a voice that throbbed in the reading of certain passages from the Bible, Job, Ecclesiastes, the Psalms, the Prophets ... the entire Jewish heritage overwhelmed me, and from it was born the music.⁶⁴

Alex Cohen, an American music critic and long-time supporter of Bloch, published an article in a 1948 *Fanfare Magazine*⁶⁵ which provides an articulate counterbalance to the ongoing debate as to whether Bloch was a genuinely Jewish composer or not. Bloch himself referenced this article,⁶⁶ considering it, at least at one time, to be the most accurate writing about him:

It may be true that no-one but a Jew could have conceived such works as 'Schelomo' or the 'Israel Symphony'. Even here, however, it is obvious that the Jew had to be Ernest Bloch, and not a Mendelssohn, a Mahler, or a Schoenberg ... The truth is that Bloch's imagination is sufficiently universal in character to adapt itself to the tenore and essence of whatever subject he has chosen ... The 'Jewish' works represent the utterance of Ernest Bloch meditating upon Jewish subjects. The remainder, considerably the larger portion of the body of his works, shows us a universal artist of wide vision and sympathies contemplating life, the eternal mysteries, and the world about him.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 151.

⁶⁵ Alex Cohen, "Ernest Bloch," *Fanfare* (January, 1948): 4-8.

⁶⁶ William R. Lawson, *Draft Biography of Ernest Bloch*, May 14, 1941 (Bloch Collection, LOC).

⁶⁷ Alex Cohen, "Ernest Bloch," *Fanfare* (January, 1948): 5. Emphasis in original.

During this period of creative output, the realities of supporting a family weighed heavily, and Bloch accepted a position as conductor for the American tour of Maud Allen's Dance Troup. The tour soon collapsed, however, and Bloch found himself once again struggling financially and without a place to call home. Fortunately, the Flonzaley Quartet, whose members had become friends and supporters of Bloch, premiered his first *String Quartet* in New York on December 30th, 1916. The work was well received and this success led to many others. In time, Bloch's family joined him in the new country, full of hope for a brighter future there.⁶⁸

1.4 The Middle Period

In 1919, Bloch won the Coolidge Prize for his *Suite* for viola and piano. This was a pivotal moment, marking a stylistic shift away from the 'Jewish Cycle' and firmly establishing Bloch in the American musical scene. The years following his 'Jewish Cycle' are often described as his 'Academic Period',⁶⁹ lasting from the early 1920s into the early 1950s. Bloch lived the majority of this period in America, although he spent much of the 1930s in Europe. Awards and recognition steadily increased, and in 1924 he became an American citizen. In 1927, he composed *America: An Epic Rhapsody*, which expressed his love for his new homeland, and included a final anthem which he hoped would be a contender for the American National Anthem. During this time, Bloch held many teaching positions in such institutions as The Mannes School of Music, The Cleveland Institute of Music, The San Francisco Conservatory, and The University of California (Berkeley).⁷⁰ Lillian Hodghead, founding member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, described Bloch as:

... one of the really great musical personalities of our time ... an unsurpassed teacher and lecturer, one of the most gigantic technicians I ever knew. He understood Bach like the back of his hand. Students working with him had that sense of watching a door being opened on a

⁶⁸ See Appendices B for notes on Jewish music on the classical stage.

⁶⁹ David Kushner, *Ernest Bloch, a Guide to Research*, 32.

⁷⁰ See Appendices C for a photograph of Bloch with students.

musical work, with Bloch making it live as no one else could except possibly its creator.⁷¹

His lectures covered topics ranging from “The Modern Music of Tomorrow”, through to “Music: a luxury or a necessity?”.⁷² He was especially passionate about the Renaissance period, and lectured and conducted choir rehearsals based on the music of De Lasso, Palestrina and their contemporaries.⁷³ He strongly emphasised the value of learning not from prescribed textbooks, but directly from the masters themselves. For him, “it was essential to be artistically communicative rather than *au courant*. Music was, within his frame of reference, a spiritual expression aimed at his listeners, a pronouncement of both the heart and of the mind.”⁷⁴ Many of his pupils became major figures in the American music scene, including Roger Sessions, Bernard Rogers and Quincy Porter.

During his academic period, Bloch composed a large amount of repertoire in the neo-classical style, including the *Concerto Grosso no. 1* for string orchestra (1925), the *Piano Quintet no. 1* (1923) and the *Sonata no. 1* for violin and piano (1920). Other works written during this period include *Voice in the Wilderness* (1936) and *Evocations* (1937), which are more exotic in style, using pentatonic scales, tritones, fluctuating metres and tonalities, and rhapsodic cadenza-like passages. Works from this period “revealed the increasingly varied palette of the musician’s creative brush ... Bloch proved that eclecticism and originality are not necessarily incompatible”.⁷⁵

The *Violin Concerto* (1938) was also written during this period and includes Native American themes. Joshua Friedlander, in his study of the *Concerto*, reflects, “Perhaps the plight of Jews in the 1930s and the exploitation of Native

⁷¹ Don Alex Pitt, “The San Francisco Conservatory of Music,” *Opera and Concert* (August 1951): 22.

⁷² Ernest Bloch, *Biography and Comment* (San Francisco: The Margaret Mary Morgan Co, 1925), 28-29.

⁷³ “He held fast to the traditions of the past, particularly those upon which he was nurtured. His love of Renaissance choral music, for example, brought him comfort and solace, poignantly so during his final days of life”. Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 10.

⁷⁴ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 10.

⁷⁵ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 7-8.

tribes by Americans subconsciously inspired him to juxtapose the Judaic and Native-like melodic gestures in the Violin Concerto".⁷⁶ This Concerto led the way to Bloch's final creative period.

1.5 The Final Years

In 1941, Bloch stumbled across a small town in Oregon called Agate Beach. Inspired by its rugged cliffs and ocean views, he decided to call this place home until the end of his life. Kushner describes the works from Bloch's final years:

The single element that separates them, for the most part, from the earlier works is the increasing objectivity and absolutism that replaces the often overt subjectivity and emotionalism. The titles alone testify to this change; instead of Psalms, Poems, and Evocations, there are now Suites, Symphonies, and Concertos.⁷⁷

In his final years, Bloch became increasingly consumed by the music of Bach, spending many hours studying his scores and writing out fugues from memory. Bach's influence is strongly present in Bloch's final compositions, in particular the *Solo Suites*, two of which are written for solo violin (discussed in Chapter 4.6). Many of these later works feature fugues and passacaglias, with clear and concise motivic material. To Kushner, "The compositions of the Agate Beach period are, for the most part, an amalgam of Bloch's best creative impulses".⁷⁸

By the time of his death in 1959, Bloch had been the recipient of numerous awards, including a Gold Medal from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the New York Music Critic's Circle Award for chamber music and symphonic music. An Ernest Bloch Society had formed in England, with members including Sir Thomas Beecham, Romain Rolland, Bruno Walter and even Albert Einstein,

⁷⁶ Joshua Friedlander, "The Cultural Influence of Ernest Bloch's Violin Concerto" (PhD Thesis, Florida State University, 2015), 77.

⁷⁷ Kushner, *Ernest Bloch, a Guide to Research*, 35.

⁷⁸ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 8.

who claimed, "I esteem the works of Ernest Bloch above those of any great contemporary known to me".⁷⁹

The awards and honours bestowed upon Bloch during his lifetime attest to the fact that his achievements were valued and respected by many of his contemporaries. Yet over time, audiences seeking newer musical trends increasingly overlooked his music. As Kushner writes, "It is ... a verity that some of his most important works, especially those emanating from his final years, had to wait until recently for the recognition that is their due."⁸⁰ In Bloch's own words:

Music consists ... of the incomparable legacy left to us by the great master ... Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner never had any idea of amusing or diverting. They had a message to deliver to humanity through words and sounds ... when the public is wearied by the childish harmonic, instrumental, and rhythmic games with which our generation seems mostly concerned, the message of these great masters will shine in all its glory, because, being purely human, it is eternal.⁸¹

This study reflects on the timeless nature of Bloch's music, seeking to contribute to scholarly awareness and understanding of the violin works, and to reestablish their place in the repertoire as a whole.

⁷⁹ Unknown author, *Some Opinions on Ernest Bloch and His Music* (Bloch Collection, LOC).

⁸⁰ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 9.

⁸¹ Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Program Book (March 28-29, 1958): 172-173, quoted in Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 10.

Chapter 2

2. Performing Bloch

2.1 Developing a Performance Practice Concept Within Bloch's Violin Repertoire

It is a paradox of music today that so often the works which have less to say to us, say it with a complexity and difficulty that mystifies. They are hard to listen to, and effortlessly easy to understand or rather to see through. Bloch's music presents no formidable barriers to listening, but its understanding requires the intellectual effort that great art always demanded not only of its creator but in a significant degree from its public.⁸²

F.R. Blanks

Intellectual effort is indeed required of the aspiring performer of Bloch's violin repertoire. With no treatise, specialised performance editions, or accumulated performance traditions to guide interpretation, the performer must delve deeper to find interpretative clues and build a thorough understanding of the works. Chapter 1 established the historical context of Bloch's life and works. This chapter discusses the process of interpreting his violin works, presenting research findings and information on a number of key areas that informed the development of a performance practice concept within the works. The process of editing the four early unpublished violin works by Bloch is explored as a crucial piece of the research puzzle, a process that establishes the framework in which tools are developed to aid interpretation based on informed performance choices, rather than passive ones. The inextricable relationship between composer, editor and performer emerges, each interacting with and affecting the other. This study endeavours to avoid defining 'right' or 'wrong' performance choices, recognising that each performer will create their own interpretation. As James Grier states, "Style, like editing, is a moving target, and so a flexibility of approach is obligatory for editorial and all critical activities".⁸³

⁸² F. R. Blanks, "Ernst (*sic*) Bloch, 1880-1959," *Canon*, vol. 12 no. 1 (1959): 381-382.

⁸³ James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method and Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 6.

2.1.1 Bloch as Performer

The historical recordings, referred to in the Introduction, of Szigeti, Menuhin, Gingold and others, offer a window into the performance practices of the early 20th century. These world-class performers, who no doubt influenced Bloch's violin writing, exemplify playing styles not only familiar to, but much favoured by Bloch, and therefore represent interpretations of the works true to the composer's intentions. A little-known historical recording of particular interest is that of Bloch conducting and performing his own music. The album, *Bloch Performs Bloch*,⁸⁴ contains the *Sacred Service* (1930-33) and *Schelomo* for cello and orchestra (1916) with Zara Nelsova as soloist and Bloch conducting, and *From Jewish Life* (1924) with Nelsova on cello and Bloch on piano. This recording, along with extensive notes by Alexander Knapp and commentary from Nelsova, provides the only audio record of the interpretation of the composer as performer. One finds in this recording a musical approach that perfectly balances expressivity and restraint. All the expressive colours and nuances of the music shine through without being pushed to unnecessary extremes. Nelsova recollects the experience of studying Bloch's music with him:

We worked together on *Schelomo*, *Voice in the Wilderness*, and *From Jewish Life*, as I wanted to absorb his ideas about these works ... Sometimes, when I was practising, I would hear Bloch's heavy footsteps as he ascended the stairs in his hip boots and then the door would open: 'No, No, No! Not like that, but like this!' and he would sit at the piano in his rubber boots, and we would work together for many hours. He always emphasised, for example, that *Schelomo* was a Rhapsody, not a Romance; and he objected to the fact that performances of this work were often too exaggerated and therefore distorted.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ernest Bloch, *Bloch Performs Bloch*, with the London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra, conducted by Ernest Bloch, with Zara Nelsova, Aron Marko Rothmüller and Ernest Bloch, recorded 1949 (mono), Jewish Musical Heritage Recordings SMHR CD015, 1949, 1compact disk.

⁸⁵ Ernest Bloch, *Bloch Performs Bloch*, liner notes.

2.1.2 Expressivity

Expressivity is an important subject to address at this point. Bloch had strong ideas on this topic, although at times his views seem contradictory. He often wrote of his desire for fewer virtuosi in the world, and more honest and communicative musicians.⁸⁶ He found the cold virtuosic approach to music-making more a display of technical mastery than of musical expression,⁸⁷ just as he found the mathematical compositional approach of many of his contemporaries at odds with the artistic and spiritual expression he believed to be the essence of good music.⁸⁸ Bloch wrote:

There is something tragic in the degree to which music has gradually divorced itself from life and become an ego-centric and an artificial thing. Already before the war, it had wandered from the source where all art must find its strength and its continual rebirth; it was no longer the expression of our soul and of our mind, of our epoch with its struggles, its agonies and its aspirations. It lacked emotive life; it lacked humanity. In all its branches—creation, interpretation, modes of instruction and critique—it had become a cold and calculated thing, lifeless and

⁸⁶ “... the soul of art – is lost in the passion for mechanical perfection. Everywhere, virtuosity of means; everywhere, intellectualism exalted as the standard. This is the plague of our times, and the reason of its inevitable dearth ... instrumental virtuosity was carried to excess ... But wherever this parasitism has prevailed, it has done so to the detriment of music.” Ernest Bloch, “Man and Music,” *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. XIX no. 4 (1933): 375.

⁸⁷ ‘Virtuoso’: “A term of Italian origin, applied ... to a player who excels in the technical part of his art. Such players being naturally open to a temptation to indulge their ability unduly at the expense of the meaning of the composer, the word has acquired a somewhat depreciatory meaning, as of display for its own sake.” Sir George Grove, “Virtuoso,” in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1889).

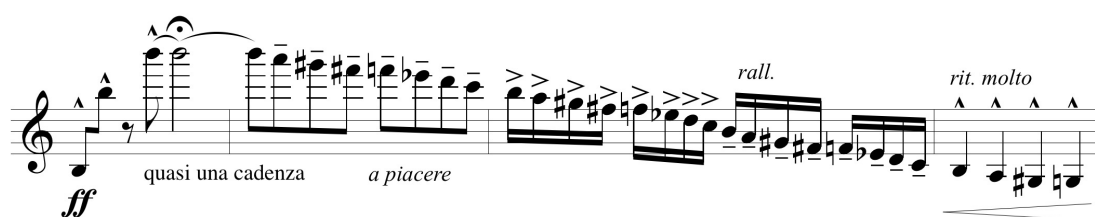
⁸⁸ “Art, for me, is an expression, an experience of life, and not a puzzle game ... or icy demonstration of imposed mathematical principles ... or dissection in a laboratory ... I would add, that in not one of my works have I tried to be ‘original’ or ‘modern’ ... Theories like ‘novelty,’ pass so quickly ... And what remains? In revenge, my sole desire and single effort has been to remain faithful to my Vision, to be True.” Olin Downes, “A Great Composer at 75”, 23.

“I have no system other than to say what is in me. I cannot engage in synthetic music making. If I wanted to engage in mathematics, I would have become a mathematician, and if I had wanted to theorize about music I would have become a philosopher. I would rather sweep the streets than write synthetic music.” Alfred H. Meyer, “What Music Means to Ernest Bloch,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 16, 1939, quoted in Strassburg, *Voice in the Wilderness*, 78.

unspirited. Music was no longer the emanation of a race and a people, a spontaneous birth out of life. It was a music of musicians ...⁸⁹

According to Suzanne Bloch, the first performance of Bloch's *Mélodie* (1923) for violin and piano, with Bloch accompanying violinist Andre Ribaupierre, was so overtly expressive the audience apparently cringed.⁹⁰ In his notes to the Flonzaley Quartet about his newly composed *String Quartet no. 1* (1916), Bloch wrote, "Don't fear an 'excess' of emotion".⁹¹ The abundance of detailed performance markings found throughout all of Bloch's scores (Ex. 1) further indicates his demand for 'excessive' emotion. His compositions continued to call for an extreme expressive range that reached its zenith in works such as the *Violin Sonata no. 1* (1920), discussed in Chapter 4.1.

The restraint found in the *Bloch Performs Bloch* recording, which seems to contradict Bloch's desire for an extreme emotional range, may have resulted from the recording environment, in which accuracy tends to dominate over expressivity — an issue for all recording artists. Nonetheless, this slightly confusing array of points and opinions only reinforces the necessity for the performer to develop a rigorous and thorough understanding of each work, both historically and analytically.



Ex. 1: Bloch *Violin Sonata no. 1*, first movement, violin, measures 38-41

⁸⁹ Ernest Bloch, "Man and Music," *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. XIX no. 4 (1933), 375.

⁹⁰ A full account of this story can be found in Chapter 4.2.

⁹¹ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 37.

2.1.3 Finding Form

A significant challenge for any performer of Bloch's music is to maintain awareness of the overarching shape and form of the works. Bloch's musical material is often fluid in nature and the performer can easily be swept away by the rhapsodic character without a sense of the bigger picture. This danger is increased by Bloch's preference for cyclical forms, shifting chromaticism, and frequent repetition of material. Ernest Newman elaborates on the melodic freedom in Bloch's writing:

... Bloch recaptures the rhythmic freedom of other lands and other times: the melodies run their course untrammelled by considerations of regularly recurring stresses, and launch out into all kinds of luxuriant foliations of a type the secret of which music once possessed but has long lost.⁹²

Bloch could not always define an exact approach to his music. Italian pianist, Guido Agosti, described the process of attempting to establish a strict tempo for Bloch's *Piano Sonata* (1935) with the composer thus:

... we worked together to decide on the metronome markings in the final score. The fluid quality of much of this music made this difficult. In the end, after we had gone through page after page, each of us taking turns playing and discussing, Bloch realized that he was unable to be consistent with his tempi, and decided not to put any metronome markings in his score.⁹³

Bloch ultimately added metronome markings to the final score of the *Piano Sonata*. However, one could hypothesise from Agosti's account that they are intended more as a guide than a strict instruction. Many treatises from the 19th and early 20th centuries suggest that the metronome should not be used as a

⁹² Ernest Newman, "Bloch's Melodic Freedom," *The London Times*, December 28, 1941, page unknown.

⁹³ Suzanne Bloch, "Guido Agosti Reminisces about Bloch," *Ernest Bloch Society Bulletin*, no. 21-22 (1989-1990): 25.

rigid and constant regulator of tempo, but rather as an indicator of the general speed of a given work, leaving room for rubato and tempo displacement.⁹⁴ In his 1909 article titled “The Tyranny of the Bar-line”, Daniel Gregory Mason states, “A good performance is so full of these minute retardations and accelerations that hardly two measures will occupy exactly the same time.”⁹⁵ James Brown takes a stronger view in his 1927 article, “The Amateur String Quartet”:

... the metronome has no value whatsoever as an aid to any action or performance that is musical in intention ... musicians ought to distinguish between (1) the sort of timing that results from dull, slavish obedience to the ticking of a soulless machine, and (2) that noble swing and perfect control of pulsation which comes into our playing after years of practice in treating and training the sense of time as a free, creative human faculty.⁹⁶

In speaking about his *Trois Poèmes Juifs* (1913), Bloch points out that, “The form is free, but it is really there, for I believe that our constitution demands order in a work of art”.⁹⁷ This statement can be applied to many of Bloch’s works, such as *Abodah* (see Chapter 4.5), where a sense of freedom can be used as an expressive tool, supported by a fundamental understanding of the underlying shape and form of the work. Bloch’s own advice to students on learning a new piece provides great insight:

... try to grasp its shape, its rhythm, its key. Melody, nuances. It will be excellent for him to sing it, to get accustomed to the melody, its expression. In brief, he will find what the interpretation ought to be.

⁹⁴ See Chapter 3.2 for further discussion of tempo flexibility.

⁹⁵ Daniel Gregory Mason, “The Tyranny of the Bar-line,” *The New Music Review*, no. 97 (1909): 33.

⁹⁶ James Brown, “The Amateur String Quartet III,” *The Musical Times*, vol. 68 no. 1014 (1927): 714.

Further reading: “The traits that distinguish Modern style ... unyielding tempo, literal reading of dotting and other rhythmic details, and dissonances left unstressed ... light, mechanical, literal, correct, deliberate, consistent, metronome, and regular. Modernists look for discipline and line, while they disparage Romantic performance for its excessive rubato, its bluster, its self-indulgent posturing, and its sentimentality.” Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music, a Period Performer’s History of Music for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 57.

⁹⁷ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 35.

When the conception is perfectly clear in his brain, the fingers, being led by a higher will, will undoubtedly obey and be drilled in half the time. And instead of an incorrect, arbitrary, impersonal, half-dead performance, there will be understanding, life and musicality in his playing.⁹⁸

Bloch refers to a higher order of conception, necessary on the part of the performer, to find what the interpretation ought to be. For this study, taking on the role of editor, discussed in the following section, provided the means for understanding the duality of freedom and order within his compositions.

2.2 Understanding the Score – Editing as a Form of Research

“...editors are historians of the texts they edit”⁹⁹
J. Grier

2.2.1 Informing the Editing Process

As James Grier suggests, editing is a research process based on and informed by historical understanding. The task of the editor is to mediate between and build upon their understanding of the composer, the work in question, and the potential performer of that work. In his renowned book, *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method, and Practice*,¹⁰⁰ Grier describes editing as a circular process, much like the methodology applied in this study. He suggests four constituent principles in editing:

- (1) Editing is critical in nature.
- (2) Criticism, including editing, is based on historical inquiry.
- (3) Editing involves the critical evaluation of the semiotic import of the musical text; this evaluation is also historical inquiry.

⁹⁸ Ernest Bloch, “Securing the Best Results from Piano Study,” *The Etude*, vol. 41 (1923): 591.

⁹⁹ James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method and Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 142.

¹⁰⁰ James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method and Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

- (4) The final arbiter in the critical evaluation of the musical text is the editor's conception of the musical style; this conception, too, is rooted in a historical understanding of the work.¹⁰¹

Following these principles, the research processes, as performer and as editor, combine as a series of educated and critically informed choices that involve the authority of the composer, editor, and performer, "... in short, the act of interpretation."¹⁰² This interconnectedness became increasingly clear in the editing and performance preparation of the four early works by Bloch, with the two processes relying on and informing each other. In Margaret Bent's view, "Making a good edition is an act of criticism that engages centrally with the musical material at all levels, large and small".¹⁰³ Such detailed engagement with the scores proved invaluable in every aspect of the research process in this study.

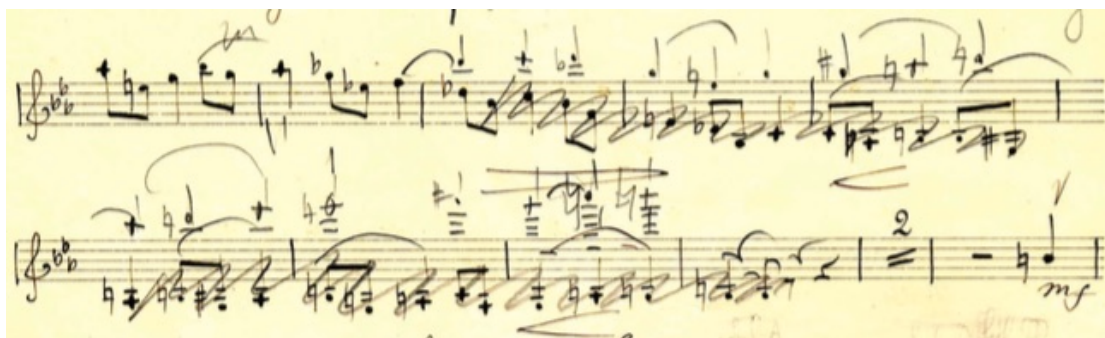
2.2.2 Editing Issues

While editing the four early works by Bloch, many of the standard editorial issues presented by original manuscripts were encountered. Bloch's penmanship at times lacked clarity, with overlapped markings on pages where he introduced multiple changes (Ex. 2). Areas of ambiguity in dynamics, articulations, expressive text, and even pitch, along with numerous discrepancies between the violin and piano parts, were the greatest editorial challenges. Frequently throughout all four works, the score and violin parts display differing markings in dynamics, articulation, and notation. Access to the Bloch archives at the Library of Congress enabled first-hand viewing of the original manuscripts. These permitted far greater insight than scanned copies, with newly visible layers in pencil and ink illuminating the timeline and progression of critical markings.

¹⁰¹ Grier, 8.

¹⁰² Grier, 2.

¹⁰³ Margaret Bent, "Fact and Value in Contemporary Musical Scholarship," in *CMS Proceedings: The National and Regional Meetings, 1985*, ed. William E. Melin (Boulder, CO: College Music Society, 1986), 5.



Ex. 2 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, violin, manuscript, measures 145-156

Bloch's unidiomatic piano scoring proved challenging in both editing and performance. His disproportionate understanding of the two instruments at this early stage resulted in some unnecessarily complex piano writing (Ex. 3), whereas the violin line is reliably well written. Bloch's inconsistent use of expressive text presented a similar challenge, with excessive and impractical instructions, in an unpredictable mix of French and Italian (Figure 2). A level of editorial input became necessary to ensure ease of comprehension for the user while maintaining the fidelity of the original text (Ex. 4). After all, "A musical score or part is an extremely complex piece of visual communication. The solution is not to reduce that complexity but to enable the user to grasp it efficiently."¹⁰⁴



Ex. 3 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, score, manuscript, measures 110-113

¹⁰⁴ Grier, 156.



Ex. 4 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, score, Slattery edition, measures 110-113



Figure 2. Example of excessive text found in Bloch's *Fantaisie-lied*

It quickly became apparent that the initial attempt to create so-called 'Urtext'¹⁰⁵ editions was unrealistic. There is only one Urtext – the manuscript itself. The editing goal instead became one of creating Scholarly Critical Editions, following Grier's theory that:

Critical editions should generate critical users. The advantage a critical edition offers its users is guidance from a scholar who has devoted a considerable amount of time, energy, and imagination to the problems of the piece and whose opinion is therefore worth considering.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ "An original or the earliest version of a text, to which later versions can be compared". "Urtext," In *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, (Oxford Living Dictionaries), accessed August 3, 2016, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/urtext>.

¹⁰⁶ Grier, 181.

2.2.3 Interpretation – the Relationship Between Editor and Performer

The editorial process undertaken as part of this study produced a heightened awareness of Bloch's compositional style and development, and was crucial in the evolution of a performance practice approach to the works. The relationship to the scores as editor and as performer became equal in determining the exact style of each piece based on all available information. In this way, an interpretation and performance practice closer to Bloch's intentions was established. As Grier points out, "The most important tool editors can bring to bear ... is their awareness of a style and its historical context. Where are editors supposed to obtain a notion of that style? The simplicity of the answer reveals the circularity of the process: from the text of the work."¹⁰⁷

The four editions, created from the editorial process, were used in the next research phase, namely, performance and recording. The following chapter discusses the outcome of the interdependent processes of editing and performing, recognising that:

... No text, even the composer's, is fully authoritative. Only the act of performance carries authority, because in it the mutual creative intent of composer and performer is realized. The text carries nothing more than an enabling set of instructions.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Grier, 30.

¹⁰⁸ Grier, 68.

Chapter 3

3. The Early Unpublished Works



Figure 3. Title pages of Bloch's early unpublished violin works

Chapter 3 examines four early violin works by Bloch, previously unpublished and therefore little known: *Sérénade Morceau*, *Fantaisie*, *Fantaisie-lied* and *Méditation*. Each work is explored through historical background and context, content analysis, score editing, and performance. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Bloch's fingerings found throughout each handwritten manuscript, explaining how these, along with other clues in the score, can inform the performance practice of Bloch's complete violin repertoire.

Background

Bloch's compositional talent was beginning to flourish in the late 1890s. By 1897, aged just 17, he had composed a full string quartet and a handful of symphonic works.¹⁰⁹ By the turn of the century, he had a host of works to his name and his course was set to become a composer. Among these were the four short works for violin and piano/organ that are examined in this chapter.¹¹⁰

Bloch was studying violin in Belgium during this pivotal time, under the tutelage of Eugène Ysaÿe and Franz Schörg. Compositional studies were supervised by François Rasse, himself a pupil of César Franck. Bloch lived with Schörg, a well-respected chamber musician, and through him was exposed to a wealth of new chamber music. Through Ysaÿe, Bloch found himself in the company of many of Europe's leading musical personalities. Private gatherings at the Ysaÿe household brought together eminent musicians, including the Romanian violinist and composer George Enescu, to play music and discuss life and the arts. Lessons with Ysaÿe often extended late into the evening, with Mme Ysaÿe, an accomplished singer, ever present and playing the gracious host. In gratitude for her hospitality, Bloch wrote a short song titled *Musette* (1898) for Mme Ysaÿe. This was one the first of Bloch's compositions to catch Eugène Ysaÿe's attention. The manuscript is kept in the Bloch Archives at the Library of Congress.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Manuscripts of these and many other early works can be found in the Library of Congress Bloch Collection.

¹¹⁰ Bloch also made two attempts at writing for solo violin and orchestra during this time. In 1898 he wrote *Poème Concertante*, which he later revised as a *Concerto* in 1899.

¹¹¹ LOC, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003561022/>.

Within the *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere of Brussels at the time, Bloch was surrounded by an abundance of musical sounds and styles. His early violin works reflect these influences, notably the unique and virtuosic playing of Ysaÿe, the oriental predilections of the Russian Five, and the impressionistic colours of French composers such as Fauré and Debussy. As Szigeti wrote in his 1947 memoirs, “Who, knowing both Ysaÿe’s playing and Bloch’s string writing, can fail to acknowledge the impress that the former’s style, at least so it seems to me, left on Bloch?”¹¹²

Hints of the Judaic melodies sung by his father also feature in Bloch’s early works. These influences emerged more fully developed in many later works, in particular those from his ‘Jewish Cycle’. Bloch’s love of his homeland, Switzerland, was expressed in the Symphonic Poem *Helvetia* (1929), which he described as:

... peasants and their simple songs ... the various cantons, a veritable procession in which one distinguishes the cry of a vendor of mountain cheeses – heard in my childhood in Geneva ... a hymn, in minor, of a folk character ... an old song of Geneva, *Cé qué lé no* (*The One Who Is Above*).¹¹³

Bloch’s interest in exotic themes and oriental sounds is recognisable in later works such as his *Four Episodes* for chamber orchestra (1926), and *Nuit Exotique* for violin and piano (1924). Hints of French impressionism are scattered throughout many later works, notably the two *Violin Sonatas*.

This was the beginning of Bloch’s serious foray into composing and the works of that time reveal much about his early influences and his emerging style: “The student works reflect the influences of Bloch’s teachers and of the then current musical trends; they also indicate, rather clearly, the compositional path the composer was to follow in his maturity”.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Szigeti, *With String Attached*, 121.

¹¹³ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 77.

¹¹⁴ David Kushner, *Ernest Bloch and His Music* (Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1973), 26.

As previously noted, perhaps the greatest treasure hidden within these early manuscripts is the wealth of extra technical and performance markings made by the composer. Scattered throughout the scores are Bloch's own fingerings and articulations — direct insights into how he played the works, and the in-vogue Franco-Belgian playing style of the day. This invaluable resource, key to unlocking a performance practice concept within Bloch's violin works, is examined in this chapter.

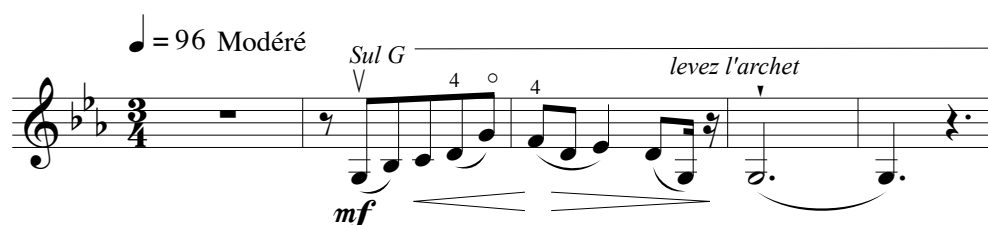
3.1 The Four Early Violin Works by Bloch

3.1.1 *Sérénade Morceau* for Violin and Piano (Geneva, 8-9 January, 1898)

CD 1 track 3, Edition 1

Sérénade Morceau is the shortest and in many ways simplest of the four early violin works by Bloch, written in just two days.¹¹⁵ Originally titled *Morceau* [*Piece*], Bloch later added *Sérénade* in thick blue pencil (see Figure 2). The title fittingly describes the character of the work — a simple serenade piece with a folk-like charm.

The structure of *Sérénade Morceau* is cyclical, with repeating themes throughout. It opens with an eight-measure introduction, beginning with a sustained chord of open fourths and fifths on Eb and Bb in the piano part. The violin then enters with the main thematic material: a three-measure rising and falling phrase on the G string (Ex. 5).



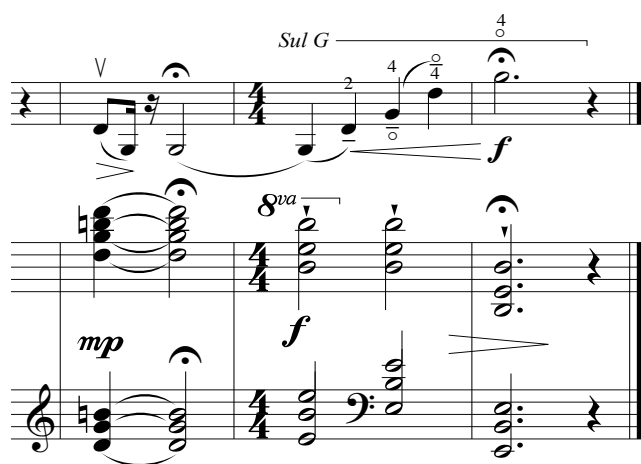
Ex. 5 Bloch *Sérénade Morceau*, violin, measures 1-5

¹¹⁵ This is an assumption based on the indicated dates.

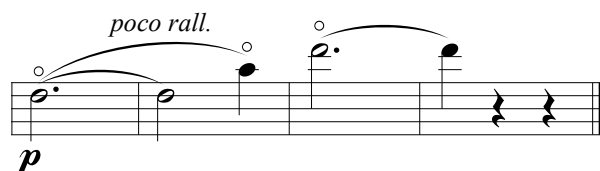
Shortened versions of this theme are used throughout the work, in particular a rhythmic figure over a falling fifth, consisting of a quaver followed by a semiquaver and semiquaver rest (Ex. 5, second measure, third beat). By shortening the last note (rather than having two straight quavers) Bloch has given the motif a particular rhythmic character. His placement of a 'dagger' staccato on the final sustained G of the phrase is unusual and uncommon in notational practices today (Ex. 5, third measure). The dagger is a much-debated symbol in musical performance in the 21st century. As with many such markings, interpretation differs vastly throughout history and between different countries and musical styles. The marking is generally used in reference to shorter notes, suggesting an alteration of either the length or articulation of the note. Bloch's placement of the dagger over a sustained note is an anomaly that required closer investigation to decipher his meaning. Ultimately, it was concluded that the marking is in fact referring to the space before the daggered note. This conclusion was confirmed by a lightly scribbled marking that at first escaped attention — *levez l'archet* [*raise the bow*], suggesting that Bloch's intention was to create space between the repeated G's, rather than a sustained legato (Ex. 5). It became clear that this marking, and the subsequent lift it creates in the line, was an important characteristic of the work. This detailed instruction on the score is a result of the composer also being the performer of the work, and is an example of the kind of inconspicuous marking that could easily be left out of a published edition.

Harmonically, *Sérénade Morceau* has frequent shifts. The opening begins with open chords and an emphasis on G tonality, but as the work develops, so too does the chromatic harmonic structure. The open harmonies of the beginning return in measure 71 for a final coda-like section, with a restatement of the opening motif, this time with the violin muted (CD 1 track 3, 2:36). The final five-measure phrase contains two thematic fragments of the descending fifth, after which the violin rises up the G string in a series of harmonics. In the closing two measures, Bloch shifts the metre for the first time in the work from 3/4 to 4/4, as the violin and piano parts move in opposing directions. The piano diminishes in dynamic as the chords become increasingly lower, whereas the violin is marked

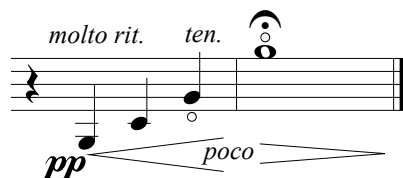
to increase in dynamic as the sequence of harmonics lifts the line higher (Ex. 6). A similar sequence can be found in final bars of *Mélodie* for violin and piano (1923) (Ex. 7), and also in the closing first violin line of Bloch's *String Quartet no. 5* (1956) (Ex. 8).



Ex. 6 Bloch *Sérénade Morceau*, score, measures 82-84



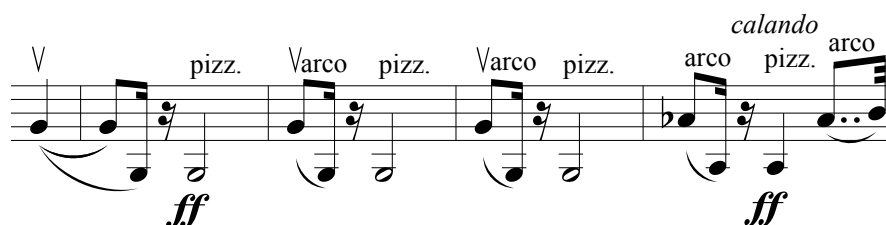
Ex. 7 Bloch *Mélodie*, violin, measure 78-81



Ex. 8 Bloch *String Quartet No. 5*, fourth movement, 1st violin line, p. 39, s. 4, measures 4-5¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Ernest Bloch, *String Quartet no. 5* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1961), 39.

While sweeping arched phrases give *Morceau* a French character, a folk-like atmosphere prevails. Low registers, extensive use of *sul G* and *sul D* colours,¹¹⁷ simple open chords and harmonies, characterful rhythmic patterns, heavy accents, octaves throughout the piano part, and pizzicato¹¹⁸ give *Morceau* a rustic character (Ex. 9).



Ex. 9 Bloch *Sérénade Morceau*, violin, measures 63-67

Within *Sérénade Morceau*, Bloch seems to be experimenting with cyclical forms and the consequent repetition of simple thematic material, using rhythmic and harmonic contrast to create diversity in colour and character. The sweeping lyricism of the melodic line is a precursor to many later works, such as *Poème Mystique*, in which the composer would fully realise and master this effect.

3.1.2 *Fantaisie* for Violin and Piano, for Eugène Ysaÿe (Geneva, completed on March 13th, 1897)

CD 1 track 8, Edition 4

Fantaisie, dedicated to Eugène Ysaÿe, is a work of intensity and drama, like much of Bloch's later repertoire. Although written one year before *Sérénade Morceau*,

¹¹⁷ Playing a passage on the G or D string that might otherwise be played on a higher string for convenience.

¹¹⁸ A section of pizzicato from measures 63-67 presented issues in performance (see Ex. 9). It is almost technically impossible to play a fortissimo pizzicato open G without turning it into a snap, or 'Bartok Pizzicato'. To avoid such undesirable percussive effects, a gentler approach must be taken, which in turn creates a weakness in the tone and an imbalance between the two parts – with the piano at this point playing sforzando octaves. The pizzicato is also marked over a sustained minim, which is simply impossible given the rapid decay of pizzicato. It was tempting to ignore the pizzicato marking and bow out the section in order to create a more powerful tone, but loyalty to the score prevailed and best attempts were made to produce a strong but unpercussive pizzicato (CD 1 track 3, 2:12).

it is a far more complex composition. It contains “surging mood swings”,¹¹⁹ extreme shifts of character, a vast dynamic range, and a melodic line that covers several octaves. According to Suzanne Bloch, “When he wrote the *Fantaisie* [sic], he was of course in blissful ignorance of what was to come, and with all the hopes, illusions and aspirations of his nineteen [sic] years, poured out everything he felt within himself.”¹²⁰

The opening begins boldly, with fortissimo in both parts and an *energico sul G* phrase in the violin (Ex. 10). The mood gradually softens over the six-measure introduction, before Bloch turns an unexpected corner and changes both key and time signature to C minor in 3/4. The majority of the work continues in this triple metre, interspersed with fragments from the opening 4/4 theme in varying forms. A rhythmic motif established in the opening – two semiquavers followed by a quaver (Ex. 10, second measure, second beat) – is particularly favoured in both parts. This active, rhythmic characteristic is strongly indicative of the ‘Jewish Cycle’ style yet to come (CD 1 track 8, 0:03, 1:25, 2:03, 5:40).

Maestoso ♩ = 120

Sul G

Violon

ff energico

Piano

Maestoso energico

ff

Ped. -----

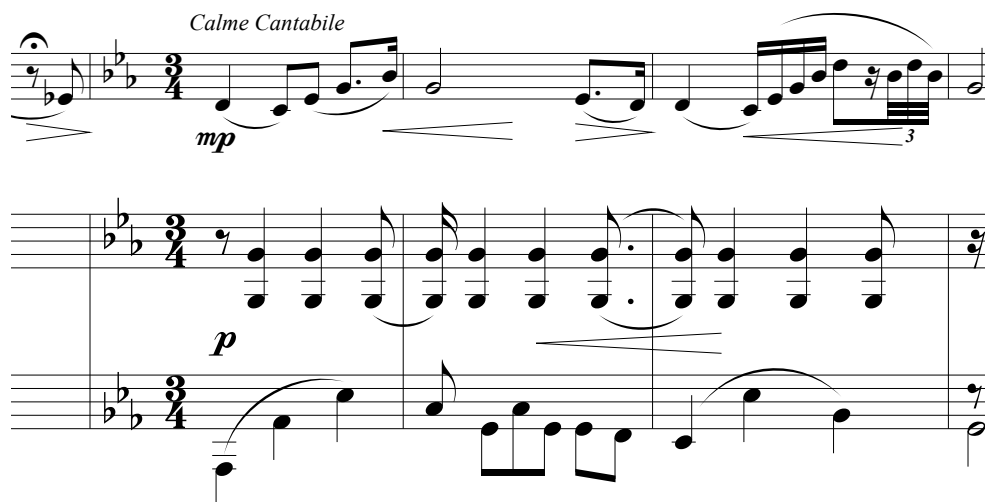
Ex. 10 Bloch *Fantaisie*, score, measures 1-2

The *Calme Cantabile* theme that follows the introduction is more French in character (Ex. 11), pre-empting the flowing lines and rising and falling gestures

¹¹⁹ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 17.

¹²⁰ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Works of Ernest Bloch*, with Hyman Bress and Charles Reiner, liner notes.

in *Sérénade Morceau* and in more developed later works such as *Poème Mystique*. The general mood, however, remains full and dramatic.



Ex. 11 Bloch *Fantaisie*, score, measures 7-10

Fantaisie is cyclical in form, therefore themes and motifs repeat throughout, at times canonically (Ex. 12). This style of canonic writing between the violin and piano lines appears throughout many of Bloch's later works, including the two *Violin Sonatas* (CD 1 track 8, 2:10).

f

ff

Ex. 12 Bloch *Fantaisie*, score, measures 61-65

Accompanying figures are far more complex and varied than in *Morceau*. *Fantaisie* is the first example of Bloch's use of pianistic techniques such as rising arpeggiated figures (CD 1 track 8, 2:00, 3:00), and melodic lines played in octaves to intensify the dramatic impact of a particular phrase (Ex. 12, CD 1 track 8, 2:10) — techniques that can be found extensively throughout both *Violin Sonatas*.

Fantaisie ends with an energetic *Presto* coda, consisting of a sequence of rising statements from the violin and a triple forte rising arpeggio in the piano. This arpeggiated figure is written very lightly in the manuscript, suggesting that it was added later as a possible addition to the part (Ex. 13, first measure). The recording for this study contains this arpeggio, as it was felt to enhance the dramatic character of the line (CD 1 track 8, 5:47). Following this flourish from the piano, both parts join forces, with a shift back to 4/4 for a strongly accented unison statement of C minor to end the work (CD 1 track 8, 5:50).



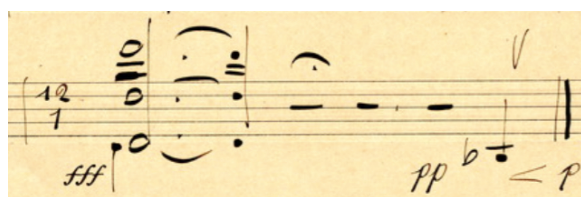
Ex. 13 Bloch *Fantaisie*, score, manuscript, measures 166-170

Arguably the most effective and imaginative of all the early works, *Fantaisie* contains an extensive range of colours and dramatic impact within a broad, well-structured shape. Such clarity and conviction made it one of the easier works to interpret and perform. Only one small section proved difficult in performance. In measures 96-102 (CD 1 track 8, 3:18-3:31) the piece seems to lose direction. The texture becomes thin and the previously well-written piano part loses intensity. Bloch ends this section with a measure in the unconventional metre of 12/4,

originally written as 12/1 (Ex. 14 and 15). It is unclear why Bloch felt the need to change the time signature at all, as the passage could easily have remained in 3/4. An indication, perhaps, of the still developing skills of the young composer.



Ex. 14 Bloch *Fantaisie*, score, manuscript, measure 102



Ex. 15 Bloch *Fantaisie*, violin, manuscript, measure 102

Bloch's *Fantaisie* pays homage to Ysaÿe's virtuosic violin playing. It contains the boldness and rhythmic intensity as well as the sweetness of melody that are strong features of his later style. As Suzanne Bloch described it, "This music ... shows glimpses of what is to come; the vital drive of thematic material however unoriginal it was at the time ... it's [sic] development ... the emotional content; all to be part of Bloch's music until the end."¹²¹ Acknowledging these contrasts in character is key to interpreting this impressive early work by Bloch.

¹²¹ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Works of Ernest Bloch*, with Hyman Bress and Charles Reiner, liner notes.

3.1.3 *Fantaisie-lied* (Genève, July 1898)

CD 1 track 1, Edition 2

Fantaisie-lied has the strongest impressionist character of all the early works. Transparency of texture, elegance, and refinement within the melodically expansive lines create a serene quality. It is a melodically (rather than rhythmically) driven work, revealing the composer's ability to evoke contrasting colours and moods through his compositions even at such a young age.

The opening section of 20 measures sets the mood of *Fantaisie-lied*. Both melodic and accompanying lines consist entirely of gently moving minims, crotchets and quavers, with the piano marked *doux* (Ex. 16).

Violin

Piano

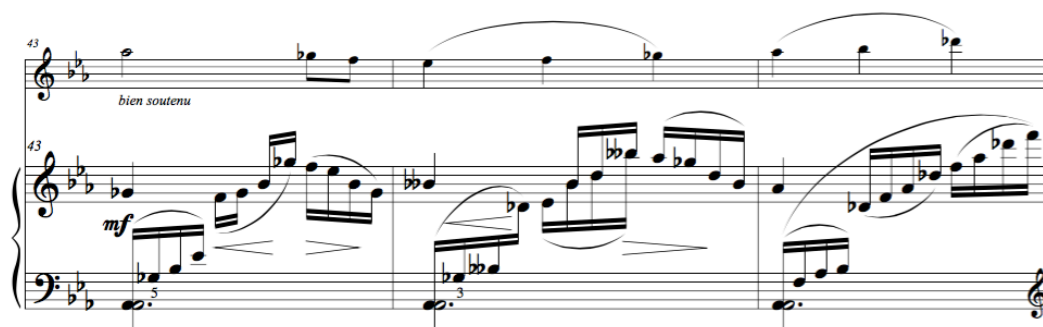
$\text{♩} = 100$
Allegretto (Pas trop lent.)

mf *Grazioso*

doux *p* *toujours p*

Ex. 16 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, score, measures 1-6

As with all of the early works, *Fantaisie-lied* follows a cyclical pattern wherein the opening theme, among others, is repeated throughout in varying guises. The character becomes more energetic at measure 21, with a series of two-measure rising fragments leading to an active accompanying pattern from measure 33.



Ex. 17 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, score, measures 43-45

These accompanying sequences of rising arpeggios (Ex. 17), along with extensive use of flowing triplet figures as in measures 133-172, were first established in *Fantaisie* and are found throughout the later *Violin Sonatas*.

The piano plays a more active role in *Fantaisie-lied* than in many of the other early works, with complex accompanying figures and numerous melodic moments, at times played alone or with a countermelody in the violin, and occasionally in canon with the violin (such as measures 62-79, CD 1 track 1, 1:43). Frequently shifting metres and keys create a fluidity and flexibility akin to the impressionistic style of many French composers of that time. Measures 92-108 contain several shifts in key and extensive metre changes between duple and triple time. A busy rhythmic impulse changes the character dramatically at measure 173, with *risoluto* syncopated rhythms in the piano and an *énergique sul G* passage in the violin (CD 1 track 1, 5:25). The mood then calms slightly before the opening melody returns with increased intensity. Here the violin line, now an octave higher, is accompanied by triple forte flowing semiquavers in a climax point of the work (CD 1 track 1, 5:50).

Fantaisie-lied ends with a reflective *Lento* section (CD 1 track 1, 6:39). The final six measures are reminiscent of Bloch's *Morceau* and *String Quartet no. 5* (Exs. 6 and 8), with the violin line rising up the G string to end on a sustained G harmonic (Ex. 18).



Ex. 18 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, score, measures 233-236

Fantaisie-lied's manuscript was one of the hardest to comprehend, with multiple layers of markings and changes on the score. Measures 68 and 69 contain an entirely new section of manuscript stuck over the original (see Volume One page 42). The violin line in measures 147-152 was completely scribbled out and overwritten with changes (see Ex. 2). The manuscript does, however, hold one very precious piece of historical information. Tucked into the top right hand corner of the cover page is the marking *Joué avec Jaques Dalcroze le 8 Sept. 1898 à Genève au theater du Parc des Eaux-Vives* [Played with Jaques Dalcroze on September 8th 1898 at Geneva in the theatre of Parc Eaux-Vives]. The sole performance of this charming piece, with the composer on violin and his then composition teacher on piano, is dutifully documented, providing an extraordinary insight into the early life of the work.

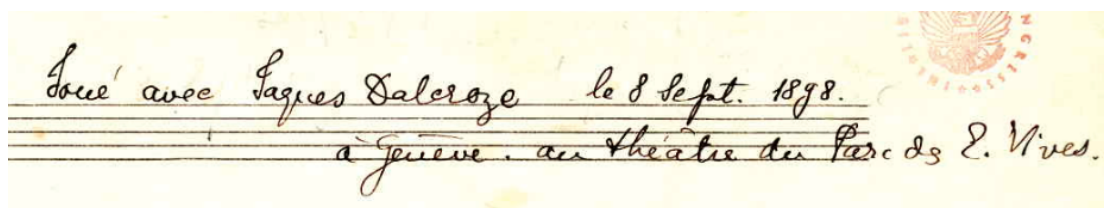


Figure 4. Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, manuscript cover page

Fantaisie-lied is an early example of Bloch's experimentation with impressionistic sounds and colours. This strong characteristic of the piece, which distinguishes it from the other early compositions, was the focus of the

performance interpretation adopted for this study, with an emphasis on warm, *sul tasto* colours, and a search for expressivity with the bow rather than left hand vibrato (CD 1 track 1, 2:44). *Fantaisie-lied* represents the beginning of an expressive voice that would become more fully developed in many later violin works, most poignantly *Nuit Exotique* and *Poème Mystique*.

3.1.4 *Méditation* for Violin and Organ (Geneva, May 2nd, 1897)

CD 1 track 5, Edition 3

As is evidenced in Figure 2, Bloch's original title for this single-movement work for violin and organ, *Aria*, was later replaced by *Méditation*. His only composition for violin and organ, *Méditation* presents an entirely different sound world to previous works. The longest of all the early violin compositions, it has a clear chamber music quality, with both instruments featured throughout in a combination of melodic and accompanying roles.

Bloch's writing in *Méditation* is indicative of similar chamber works of this period, such as Joseph Rheinberger's *Suite for Violin and Organ* Op. 166 (1890) and *Six Pieces for Violin and Organ* Op. 155 (1887), Auguste Péron's *Méditation Religieuse* (1901), and Carl Bohm's *Invocation* Op. 367 for Violin and Organ (1904). In each of these works, the unique combination of violin and organ produces an enticing new sound setting. In Bloch's *Méditation*, the *Adagio sostenuto* marking and natural timbre of the organ create a rich and mellow texture, enhanced by the low registers of the violin line that only occasionally ascends into the top register. Extensive *Sul G* markings, by now an expected feature of Bloch's violin writing, add further textural richness.

Thematic material, as in all the early works, is repeated throughout the composition in many variations. A two-measure introduction from the organ establishes the key of Ab major, into which the violin enters with the main theme (Ex. 19).

Violin

Organ

Adagio Sostenuto

Sul G

mf

Ex. 19 Bloch *Méditation*, score, measures 1-5

Bloch interweaves this theme throughout the work, with the technical capacity of the organ allowing for a fourth melodic voice. Measures 69-82 feature a violin cadenza of rich and dramatic character, followed by a variation of the opening theme played in double stops — the first example of cadential writing in Bloch's early compositions (Ex. 20, CD 1 track 5, 5:10).

En cadence

Ad libitum

Sul G

dim.

sf

poco a poco accel.

calme accel.

rit. poco a poco

sempre più tranquillo

mf

Ex. 20 Bloch *Méditation*, violin, measures 67-74

Frequently missing registration markings in the organ line, along with difficulties in establishing an appropriate organ and effective recording setup, made *Méditation* one of the more challenging works to perform and record. However, the final result reveals a composition of equal merit to many similar works from the period, and in a unique and underutilised instrumental pairing deserving of a wider audience. Bloch's *Méditation* has the quality of an extended chorale for

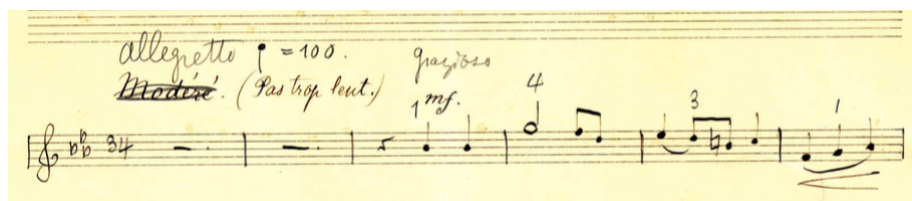
violin and organ, perhaps drawing inspiration from the prelude writing of Bach. Although Bloch never again wrote for this particular combination of instruments, Bach's influence was later expressed in his final compositions, the *Solo Suites* for violin, discussed in Chapter 4.6.

3.2 Analysis of Bloch's Markings in the Early Works

Close examination of Bloch's four handwritten manuscripts reveals many enlightening features. Throughout each of the violin parts are numerous additional pencil markings made by the composer, such as fingerings, added or changed articulations, expressive text, and other performance indications. These include: added tenuto and sostenuto markings, bowing changes (see again Ex. 2), tempo alterations (Exs. 21 and 22), and character indications (Exs. 23 and 24, note also the added *grazioso* marking to the violin part in Ex. 22). These markings were clearly added to the already finished manuscripts, suggesting Bloch's still-developing conception of the phrasing and character of the works. It is an extraordinary advantage to have access to such a range of extra interpretive markings that reveal Bloch's own violinistic approach to the works. These markings have been included in the editions created for this study, with commentary where necessary (Volume One).



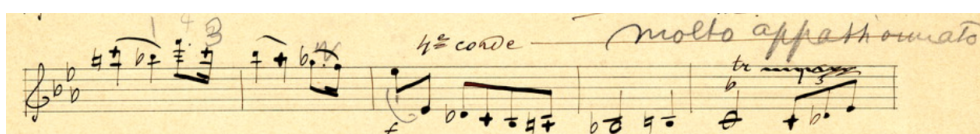
Ex. 21 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, score, manuscript, measures 1-5



Ex. 22 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, violin, manuscript, measures 1-6



Ex. 23 Bloch *Fantaisie*, score, manuscript, measures 128-131



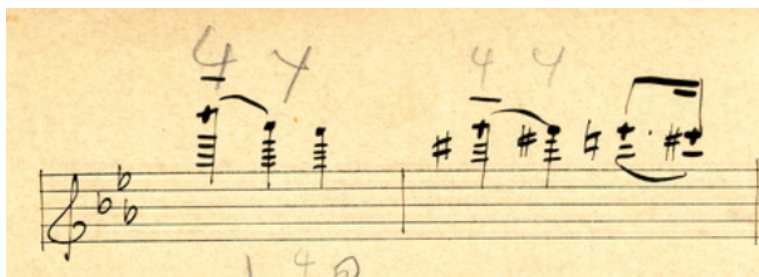
Ex. 24 Bloch *Fantaisie*, violin, manuscript, measures 126-130

Perhaps the most noteworthy discovery within these additional markings is the abundance of Bloch's violin fingerings. It is important to note that a small number of fingerings can also be found in the piano part of *Fantaisie-lied*, most likely from Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, who is known to be the first performer of the work. These have been included in the edition, but indicate only practical fingering solutions not dissimilar to a modern player's approach. Bloch's violin fingerings, however, reveal an extensive use of expressive fingerings, designed not simply to facilitate easy manoeuvring around the fingerboard. Instead, they serve an expressive purpose, through which technical ease becomes of secondary importance to a desire to bring out the full expressive possibilities of every note and phrase.¹²² For Bloch, this meant the use of fingerings that enhanced subtle slides and portamenti (Exs. 25 and 26).

¹²² For more information on expressive fingerings, refer to various articles by Clive Brown, including: Duncan Druce and Clive Brown, "Bowing and Fingering Instructions in String Music During the 18th and 19th Centuries," *University of Leeds Faculty of Performance, Visual Art and Communications* (Leeds, 2011), accessed June 4, 2017, <http://chase.leeds.ac.uk/article/bowing-and-fingering-instructions-in-string-music-during-the-18th-and-early-19th-centuries-duncan-druce-clive-brown/>.



Ex. 25 Bloch *Fantaisie-lied*, violin, manuscript, measures 1-28



Ex. 26 Bloch *Fantaisie*, violin, manuscript, measures 122-123

This choice of fingering and style of playing is indicative of the Franco-Belgian violin schooling that Bloch was receiving at the time, under the tutelage of Belgian virtuoso Eugène Ysaÿe.¹²³ Although written more than 20 years later, similar fingerings can be found in the manuscript and early editions of Ysaÿe's six *Sonatas for Solo Violin*.¹²⁴ Historical recordings of Ysaÿe, Flesch, Thibaud and

¹²³ For more information on Ysaÿe's expressive fingerings see: Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style, Changing Tastes in Music Performance 1900-1950* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 141-179.

¹²⁴ Eugène Ysaÿe, *Six Sonatas for Solo Violin Op. 27*, (Brussels: Edition Ysaÿe 1924), accessed September 7, 2016, http://imslp.eu/Files/imglnks/euimg/c/c9/IMSLP36551-PMLP12909-Ysaÿe_-_6_Solo_Sonatas_Op27_for_Violin.pdf.

their contemporaries, provide further confirmation of this expressive approach.¹²⁵ In these recordings – notably Ysaÿe playing Schubert's *Ave Maria* and Dvorak's *Humoresque* Op. 101 no. 7¹²⁶ – one can hear a style of playing rooted in the romantic period, in which portamenti abound, rubato was expected within a flexible approach to tempi, and vibrato was specifically used as an expressive tool rather than as a constant effect.¹²⁷ Current research into the performance practices of the 19th century by pioneers such as Clive Brown, reveal that such techniques were very much the norm during the romantic period. This stylistic approach quickly diminished in the 20th century as a more homogenised virtuosic approach began to develop. This stylistic shift was aided by the introduction and rapid advancement of recording equipment, which put the performance emphasis on 'clean' playing, described by Brown as a "... style that reduces the impact of vibrato, favours 'clean' playing, generally steady tempo, strict rhythms, and in many respects prioritises close observance of the Urtext score."¹²⁸ In 1937 Carl Flesch spoke of the "... grim, joyless, technically flawless playing which makes a Mozart Concerto sound like a Kreutzer study ... although the material, mechanical work is unsurpassed, the warmth and mystery of music have departed."¹²⁹

Eugène Ysaÿe, *Sonata no. 4 for Solo Violin*, (Brussels: Manuscript, 1923), accessed September 7, 2016, http://imslp.eu/files/imglnks/euimg/d/d8/IMSLP36704-PMLP12909-Ysaye_-_Violin_Sonata_no.4_in_E_minor_MANUSCRIPT.pdf

¹²⁵ Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style, Changing Tastes in Music Performance 1900-1950* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 5-179.

Historical recording of Sarasate:

Pablo Sarasate, *Zigeunerweisen*, Pablo Sarasate, YouTube video, 5:35, recorded ca. 1904, posted by aimson, February 12, 2007, accessed March 11, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABm7nMVyNh4&list=PLfj2eU6M3BWtvE6UXIVWT2IaHeR9vvaCr&index=2>.

¹²⁶ Franz Schubert, *Ave Maria* arr. Joseph Joachim, Eugène Ysaÿe, Camille DeCreus, YouTube video, 4:14, recorded September 9, 1914, posted by Lupot123, December 23, 2009, accessed March 11, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO9zzok_uEA.

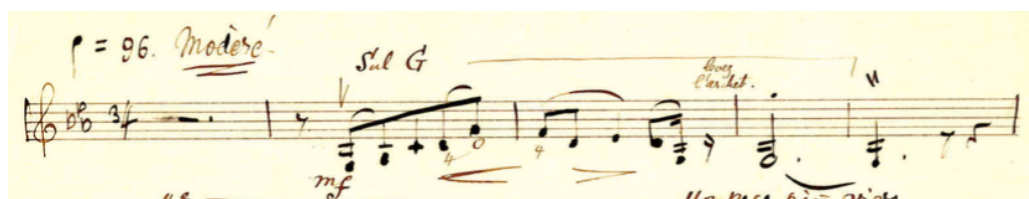
Antonín Dvořák, *Humoresque Op. 101 no. 7*, Eugène Ysaÿe, YouTube video, 3:42, n.d., posted by Classical Conditioning, December 29, 2014, accessed March 11, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siFN0IDxR9s>.

¹²⁷ It is worth noting here that these recordings do not represent Ysaÿe in his performing prime, but nonetheless provide a taste of his unique and historically significant playing style.

¹²⁸ Clive Brown, "Performing 19th century chamber music: the yawning chasm between contemporary practice and historical evidence," *Early Music* Vol. 38, Issue 3, (2010): 476. See also: Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹²⁹ Szigeti, *With String Attached*, 91.

On a number of occasions, Bloch's fingerings also suggest the use of unmarked natural harmonics.¹³⁰ To produce this effect, the violinist must shift upward to fourth position, again creating an audible slide — a subtle difference in approach that significantly enhances the expressivity within a given phrase. The opening of *Sérénade Morceau* is a prime example (Exs. 5 and 27, CD 1 track 3 0:04).



Ex. 27 Bloch *Sérénade Morceau*, violin, manuscript, measures 1-5

Bloch's use of unscored harmonics can be seen as an invitation for performers to likewise add expressive touches in performance, thus opening the possibility for individual expression and, in a sense, collaboration between the composer, the score, and the performer.

Awareness of Bloch's expressive approach to fingerings, along with an enhanced understanding of the Franco-Belgian style of playing of his time, sets the context for the performance of these short early works and lays the foundation for a performance approach to many of his later violin compositions. Although performing styles changed drastically over Bloch's lifetime, there is no denying that his pivotal early years were spent immersed in the Franco-Belgian sound world of the 19th century, and that key elements of this style, such as portamenti and rubato, can therefore be translated to later repertoire. This influence of early compositions on later works is explored and discussed in the following chapter.

¹³⁰ This refers to the use of a harmonic when it is not written as a specific instruction in the score.

Chapter 4

4. The Published Violin Repertoire

It is only the modern that ever becomes old-fashioned; nothing is so dangerous as being too modern; one is apt to grow old-fashioned quite suddenly.¹³¹

Oscar Wilde

Ernest Bloch appreciated Oscar Wilde's sentiments, which aptly describe his own approach in life and music.¹³² Disinterested in fads or fashions, Bloch wrote music in a wide variety of styles.

I had always to pay for not belonging to a group. But I never changed. And so I can enjoy very different styles and conceptions when a master was able to convey his message ... So I have no theories, no system. I always made my music as I felt I had to — tonal, atonal, polytonal, chromatic — each work has its own style.¹³³

Bloch's mature violin works encompass the full breadth of his expressive range. Each work is so distinctively crafted, the unknowing listener could be forgiven for attributing them to a variety of composers. Neoclassicism, atonality, Jewish sounds, simple folk melodies, and rhapsodic fantasies are just some of the structural and stylistic mediums through which Bloch created his violin repertoire, unified by his " ... clearly stated priority ... to give expression to the whole gamut of human emotions ... it was to this end that the technical demands pervading his violin writing were dedicated."¹³⁴

¹³¹ Oscar Wilde, "An Ideal Husband," in *Oscar Wilde The Importance of Being Ernest and Other Plays*, ed. Peter Raby, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 203.

¹³² Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 34.

¹³³ Olin Downes, "A Great Composer at 75," in *ERNEST BLOCH: Creative Spirit, a Program Source Book*, ed. Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, 22.

¹³⁴ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, recorded February, 2004, Hyperion CDA67439, 2005, 1 compact disk, liner notes.

This chapter discusses a selection of Bloch's lesser-known published violin repertoire: *Sonata no. 1*, *Poème Mystique (Sonata no. 2)*, *Mélodie*, *Abodah*, *Nuit Exotique* and two *Solo Suites*.¹³⁵ Each is explored through score and manuscript analysis, context, and performance. The unpublished works, discussed in the previous chapter, provide the background for an enhanced understanding of these later compositions. Within Bloch's published violin repertoire one can find all the styles and techniques first explored in the early works now firmly in place and fully developed. This interaction between the unknown and known (unpublished and published) is the crux of this research, enlightening the two-way influence of old and new as an essential tool for developing awareness and understanding of the works and their historical background, which then informs performance.

4.1 Sonata No. 1 (1920)

CD 3 track 1-3

Bloch's first major offering to the violin repertoire was his monumental *Sonata for Violin and Piano*. This 'tormented'¹³⁶ work coincided with the devastating effects of World War I still echoing around the world and within the musician's psyche. To Bloch, the *Sonata* represented, "the world as it is: the frantic struggle of blind and primordial forces".¹³⁷ Paul Kochanski¹³⁸ and Arthur Rubenstein premiered the *Sonata* on February 20th 1921 in New York at the Aeolian Hall, described in The New York Times the following day:

A fair audience, in view of the weather, showed interest in the new work, which was of a more forbidding character than some of the composer's earlier productions; non-melodic throughout, save for a few quiet phrases for violin in the second of its three parts, amid an exploding barrage of

¹³⁵ A small commentary on the *Baal Shem Suite* can be found in Appendices A.

¹³⁶ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

¹³⁷ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

¹³⁸ It is possible that Kochanski, long-time friend and collaborator of Szymanowski, worked with Bloch on this *Sonata*.

rebellious harmony that in serious and sincere aspects first and last gripped the hearer's attention.¹³⁹

The *Sonata* was subsequently recorded several times during Bloch's lifetime by leading violinists including Gingold, Kaufman and Heifitz.¹⁴⁰ Bartok, whose first sonata for violin and piano appeared a year later and shares a similarly unrelenting musical language, performed the *Sonata* around Europe with a number of different violinists.¹⁴¹

At the time of writing the *Sonata*, Bloch was transitioning from teaching at the Mannes School of Music in New York to his new role as Director of the Cleveland Institute of Music. The *Violin Sonata*, as with other works from this 'Cleveland Period',¹⁴² such as the *Concerto Grosso no. 1* (1925) and the *Piano Quintet no. 1* (1923), is written with a neoclassical bent. It marks a strong shift away from the 'Jewish Cycle' style, despite the determination of some critics to find Jewish traits in most, if not all, of Bloch's music. One such commentator was David Ewen, who stated:

Even within the intimate form of a violin sonata, Bloch has created music of power and dynamism. The melodic line with its savagely leaping intervals, the impulsive rhythms, and the sharply edged harmonics, all make a work that is Hebraic in its passion and lack of emotional restraint, and at the same time high-minded and original in thought.¹⁴³

It is interesting to note that Bloch's original sketch for the finale of the third movement was rejected on the premise that, "its colour was too Jewish and therefore incompatible with the first two movements".¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ "Produce Bloch Sonata," *The New York Times*, accessed August 12: 2017, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1921/02/21/103548620.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ Menuhin's score of the *Sonata*, containing his fingerings and various performance markings, can be found in the Foyle Menuhin Archive at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

¹⁴¹ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

¹⁴² Roughly 1920-1925.

¹⁴³ David Ewen, "Bloch", Ewen's Musical Masterworks, 2nd edition (New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1954), 103-104.

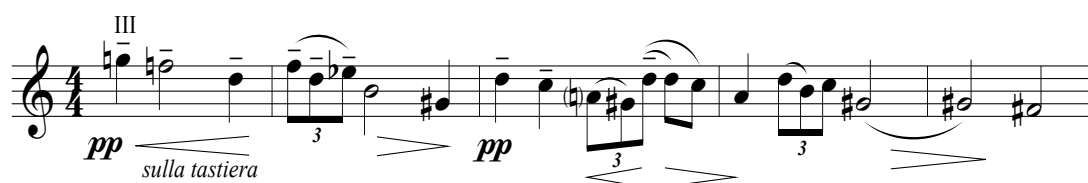
¹⁴⁴ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

The *Sonata* began as a series of thematic ideas divided into A and B groupings, sketches of which can be found in the Bloch Collection at the Library of Congress. These themes were then developed and expanded upon to become a lengthy sonata of more than 30 minutes duration. It is a rhythmically driven work of dramatic force and proportion, requiring extreme performance stamina from both instrumentalists.

The first movement, *Agitato*, “begins with a violent, ritualistic motif on the violin, combined with intricate cross-rhythms in the piano, depicting the ‘atmosphere of battle’.”¹⁴⁵ Centred on the key of A minor, it is constructed around three main thematic groups, within which there are two main styles: rhythmic motifs (Ex. 28), and lyrical motifs (Ex. 29).¹⁴⁶



Ex. 28 Bloch *Sonata no. 1*, first movement, violin, measures 4-7



Ex. 29 Bloch *Sonata no. 1*, first movement, violin, measures 60-64

Accompanying figures in both parts contain extensive use of tremolo, while the piano line features sweeping scales and arpeggios in groupings that fluidly move between sextuplets, quintuplets, triplets, and duplets, often in contrary motion.

¹⁴⁵ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

¹⁴⁶ Knapp describes another particular thematic element within the *Sonata*: “An interesting modal feature is Bloch’s use of motifs based upon an eight-note scale, comprising the intervals of two disjunctive minor tetrachords separated by a semitone: A-B-C-D-Eb-F-Gb-Ab. Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

These wave-like¹⁴⁷ accompanying figures were first established in the four early violin works, as seen in Chapter 3 (Ex. 17), but in this *Sonata* they find a more complex and developed setting (Ex. 30, see also Ex. 38).



Ex. 30 Bloch *Sonata no. 1*, first movement, score, measures 75-76

The movement reaches a climax at measure 460, when the violin and piano join forces for the first time in a unison statement of strongly accented descending quavers, before a *Presto* series of rising triplets leads into a final triple *forte* fragment of the opening theme (CD 3 track 1, 11:30).

The second movement provides a *Molto quieto* contrast to the powerful force of the first movement. A *molto misterioso* character is immediately established through gently moving duplets in the left hand of the piano and descending triplets in the right hand. The violin enters with a delicate theme, fragile to begin with, but growing increasingly agitated as the movement progresses. Knapp describes how this movement:

... was written after Bloch had read a book about Tibet. (Although he never visited the Far East, its impact upon him finds expression in several works). The composer has described this movement as mournful and

¹⁴⁷ Edward Raditz, "The Analysis and Interpretation of the Violin and Piano Works of Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)" (PhD thesis, New York University, 1975), 123.

restless at the beginning, leading to a spectacular outburst of emotion which then abates.¹⁴⁸

The movement is characterised by its descending triplet arpeggios, weeping in gesture and capturing the '*misterioso*' mood of the movement (Ex. 31, CD 3 track 2, 0:00).



Ex. 31 Bloch Sonata no. 1, second movement, score, measures 5-7

The third movement, *Moderato*, introduces an entirely new character (CD 3, track 3). This *molto pesante* movement opens with an ironic optimism that seems at odds with the previous two movements. A strongly accented driving piano part provides the ground for an oriental-sounding melody in octaves, fourths, and fifths in the violin part. Bloch described the last movement as “a barbaric march – a vision of an angry, pitiless, primitive deity; but at the end there is an atmosphere of resignation, and then the acceptance of peace.”¹⁴⁹ In ternary form, the movement begins in D major, moving through F minor before finally settling in E major. The *Sonata* ends with a lyrical and reflective coda referencing thematic material from the previous movements (CD 3 track 3, 5:50). It is not the extroverted ending one might expect from a work of such force and operatic proportions, but is instead a gentle “acceptance of peace”.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

¹⁴⁹ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

¹⁵⁰ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

4.1.1 Comment

The *Sonata* was written for the American music critic Paul Rosenfeld. Interestingly, this dedication was crossed out on the original manuscript on both score and violin part, suggesting a change of heart. Rosenfeld described the *Sonata* as containing “the titanic, virulent, and incommensurable forces upon whose breast man lies tiny and impotent”.¹⁵¹ The *Sonata* was widely celebrated at the time of its composition, and inspired much comment and descriptive interpretation. John Hastings, in his article “Ernest Bloch and Modern Music”,¹⁵² finds similar traits between Bloch’s *Viola Suite* (1919) and the *Sonata*, describing:

The soaring lyricism of its melodic line against the often savage bitterness of its underlying thought makes it a provocative and deeply moving imaginative exploration. Similar qualities are evident in Bloch’s *Sonata for Violin and Piano* from the same period, a composition of elemental force and often a brooding, psychological, even Dostoievskian pallor ... It is doubtful, indeed, if any musically knowledgeable person could listen to Bloch’s ... *Violin and Piano Sonata* or the *Viola Suite* without realising that they stand as close in structural grandeur and moral and emotional passion to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as they do, in psychological sophistication, to the twentieth.”¹⁵³

Kushner offers an interpretation of “... man’s impotence in the grand scheme of the cosmos”,¹⁵⁴ while Alex Cohen depicts demonic forces and barbaric processions.¹⁵⁵ Cohen considered the *Sonata* to be “... the most powerful and dramatic work in the whole violin-and-piano repertory”.¹⁵⁶ When describing his *Piano Sonata* of 1935, Bloch spoke of its inspiration coming from a painting by A.

¹⁵¹ Paul Rosenfeld, “The Bloch Violin Sonata,” *Musical Chronicle* (1917-1923): 131.

¹⁵² John Hastings, “Ernest Bloch and Modern Music,” *Menorah Journal*, vol. 36 no. 2 (1948): 196-215.

¹⁵³ John Hastings, “Ernest Bloch and Modern Music,” *Menorah Journal*, vol. 36 no. 2 (1948): 196-215.

¹⁵⁴ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 55.

¹⁵⁵ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 55.

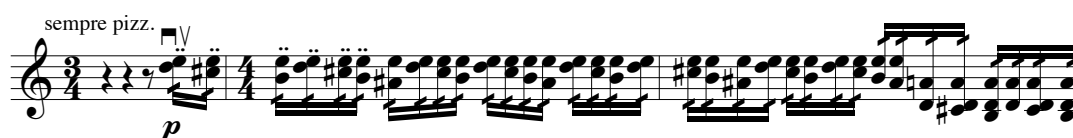
¹⁵⁶ Alex Cohen, “Ernest Bloch,” *Fanfare* (January, 1948): 4.

Kubin of “a horrible giant, trampling over armies and crushing them pitilessly. A similar mood can be found in the finale of my Violin-Piano sonata.”¹⁵⁷

4.1.2 Performance

The greatest challenge when performing this mammoth work is the relentless intensity of effort required to convey such an extreme range of emotions. The performer’s stamina is pushed to its limits — the first movement alone lasts up to 15 minutes with barely a moment’s rest. As Walter Simmons explains, the *Sonata* “... is rarely played well, as its demands on both technique and endurance – psychological, emotional, and physical – tax all but the mightiest virtuosos”.¹⁵⁸ As discussed in Chapter 2.1.3, a thorough understanding of the structure of the work, its themes and motifs, is essential for the performer’s grasp of the overarching shape. Without this, the performer is at risk of losing momentum.

Bloch’s violin works are relatively free of technical abnormalities. The music is technically challenging, but always playable. The *Sonata no. 1* does, however, contain one curious extended technique not commonly found in violin repertoire from the 20th century: a section of tremolo pizzicato (Ex. 32, CD 3 track 2, 4:40).



Ex. 32 Bloch *Sonata no. 1*, second movement, violin, measures 84-86

¹⁵⁷ Sophia Melvin, “Recollection of Ernest Bloch,” *Clavier*, vol. 19 (1980): 33.

Further commentary: “We owe to it (the *Sonata*) a musical experience of an intensity which does not arrive very often in life. We owe to it a feeling of an intensity which we can only compare to those aroused in us by the first hearing of *Die Meistersinger*, of *Pelleas*, of the *Sacre*. We owe to it a confidence in our own time, in its colour and its power, second to that given us by no piece of music – *Musical Chronicle*, Paul Rosenfeld.” Ernest Bloch, *Biography and Comment*, 20-21.

¹⁵⁸ Walter Simmons, *Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantic Composers* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004), 67.

Measures 84-88 require the player to ‘strum’ across three strings at a rapid pace. This unusual marking is so difficult to convey convincingly in performance that most performers¹⁵⁹ ignore the instruction and instead bow the entire passage.¹⁶⁰

4.1.3 Manuscript Observations

The handwritten manuscript of the *Violin Sonata no. 1* contains a mysterious marking. Under the final bars of the piece Bloch wrote: *Ecrit Nov 26 1920, Cleveland, Hotel Statler (!!!!)*, [*Written November 26th 1920, Cleveland, Hotel Statler (!!!!)*]. Why he added four exclamation marks in brackets is difficult to understand. Could this hotel have held some special significance for him? Further mystery lies in the next line, where Bloch wrote: *Presque dans le Désert ... sauf l'atmosphère!*, [*almost in the Desert ... except for the atmosphere!*]. One could easily assume he was referring to his *Voice in the Wilderness* (*Voix dans le Désert*) for cello obbligato and orchestra (1936). This work, however, was written 16 years after the *Violin Sonata*. It is possible that Bloch was referring to Elgar's work of 1915, *Une Voix dans le Désert*, a recitation (with words by the Belgian poet Émile Cammaerts) for orchestra and soprano, set within the horror of the German invasion of Belgium, in which a young peasant girl sings bravely and sweetly about the end of the war. The mood is recognisably similar in Bloch's *Violin Sonata*, with the pain and turmoil of the work closing with a bitter-sweetness akin to the young peasant girl's song. The exact meaning of the marking, however, remains a mystery.

Despite attracting much attention at the time of its composition, the *Sonata* is not widely performed today. Suzanne Bloch spoke of the plight of this extraordinary work:

¹⁵⁹ For example: Latica Honda-Rosenburg, violin performance of “Sonata no. 1,” by Ernest Bloch, recorded 2001, with and Avner Arad, on *Complete Works for Violin and Piano*, Oehms Classics OC255, 2010, 2 compact disks.

František Novotný, violin performance of “Sonata no. 1,” by Ernest Bloch, recorded March - June, 2007, with Serguei Milstein, on *Violin Works*, Radioservis CR0439-2, 2009, 2 compact disks.

¹⁶⁰ After extended experimentation with several techniques to realise this peculiar passage, the optimal solution was chosen for recording: a simple strumming motion of the first finger, keeping the joints of the finger soft and malleable. It is important to note that every player has to find their own solution to this particular technical issue.

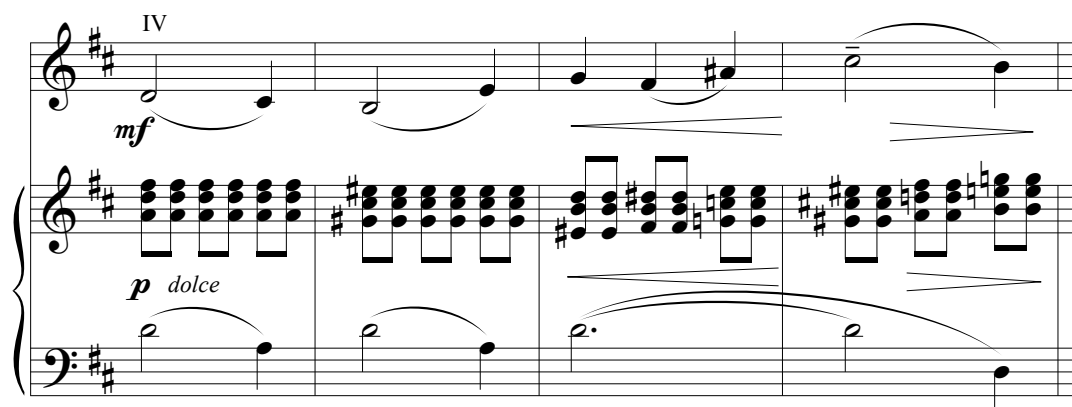
Battle-scarred, full of the fighting spirit that had carried him on, with a sardonic sense of life, he continued to write the music he knew would never be well received by the general public.¹⁶¹

4.2 *Mélodie* (1923), dedicated to André de Ribaupierre

CD 1 track 7

Mélodie is a simple, sweet miniature for violin and piano and by far the shortest work in this study. Knapp describes its two contrasting moods: “The first and third sections of *Mélodie* are Fauré-like in their lyricism, whereas the middle section, with its dotted rhythms, is more impassioned”.¹⁶² The work was premiered on May 24th 1923 at the Cleveland Institute of music.

Mélodie is in ternary form, with all sections accompanied by hypnotic, repeated quavers in the right hand of the piano. The melodic line, based primarily on the descending figure D C# B, weaves around this constant accompanying figure. Numerous hairpins, glissandi and ritardandos create what Raditz refers to as a “restless melodic line”¹⁶³ within the simple lyricism of the work.



Ex. 33 Bloch *Mélodie*, score, measures 1-4

¹⁶¹ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Works of Ernest Bloch*, with Hyman Bress and Charles Reiner, liner notes.

¹⁶² Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

¹⁶³ Raditz, 44.

Bloch dedicated *Mélodie* to the ‘genial’¹⁶⁴ Andre de Ribaupierre, “a leading personality in the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music”.¹⁶⁵ Ribaupierre, also a previous student of Ysaÿe, was a robust and expressive violinist. According to Suzanne Bloch:

When Bloch wrote the *Mélodie* that he dedicated to him, it was to bring out every facet of his friend’s lyricism. This caused some of Bloch’s students and colleagues to wince at the first hearing of the piece, as Bloch at the piano, with gusto and a wide smile, emulated the violinist broadly.¹⁶⁶

This charming recollection holds the key to unlocking a performance interpretation of this seemingly straightforward work. Following Bloch’s example, it becomes clear that the true character of the work can only be expressed by exaggerating the various hairpins, ritardandos and glissandi, rather than shying away from them, as many performers do¹⁶⁷ (CD 1 track 7, 1:50).

Mélodie is a perfect setting for incorporating the style of expressive fingerings marked by Bloch in the four early works, discussed in the previous chapter. The flowing movement of the melodic line in both of the A sections provides many opportunities for subtle slides. The opening is a case in point. Bloch’s indication to play the opening 10 measures on the G string results in extensive shifting. The modern player might endeavor to minimise the shifting and disguise consequent slides. However, allowing the natural portamenti to be audible, the otherwise simple phrase becomes more interesting and expressive — a subtle but effective difference in approach (Ex. 34, with suggested expressive fingerings and portamenti).

¹⁶⁴ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 62.

¹⁶⁵ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 62.

¹⁶⁶ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 62.

¹⁶⁷ František Novotný, violin performance of “*Mélodie*,” by Ernest Bloch, recorded March – June, 2007, with Serguei Milstein, on *Violin Works*, Radioservis CR0439-2, 2009, 2 compact disks.



Ex. 34 Bloch *Mélo die*, violin, measures 1-23 with suggested fingerings

Expressive fingerings such as these can be used to great effect throughout the work.

4.3 Sonata No. 2, *Poème Mystique* (1924), dedicated to André de Ribaupeirre and Beryl Rubinstein

CD 3 track 4

The single movement *Poème Mystique* is often referred to as Bloch's *Second Sonata* for violin and piano. Written in 1924, while he was on holiday in Santa Fe, New Mexico, it provides the antidote to the force of the *Sonata no. 1*. Suzanne Bloch described the idea for *Poème Mystique* coming to her father during a performance of the first *Sonata* at the Cleveland Institute of Music, stating, "As he observed an incomprehending audience, he wondered what these people could grasp of this violent and tormented music, thinking that he should now compose a different work of greater serenity."¹⁶⁸ Knapp offers a similar description: "Audiences at this time found the Sonata No. 1 bewildering, and Bloch, sensitive to their sense of shock, felt the need to compensate by writing something serene, ecstatic, spiritual, mystical".¹⁶⁹ According to Suzanne, the music itself was inspired by a dream Bloch had after a period of illness and a slight overdose of

¹⁶⁸ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 64.

¹⁶⁹ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

Veronal: “It was an emotional thing, unreal and ecstatic. From that dream, he found the music”.¹⁷⁰ The work represents Bloch’s lifelong wish for a more unified world in which all faiths find common ground. Suzanne described its ‘ecumenical mood’,¹⁷¹ and Kushner elaborates: “The ... one-movement essay ... in its quiescence and lofty spirituality, offers a ... message ... common to the composer, viz. the idea that there is a oneness that informs all faiths and cultures.”¹⁷²

Poème Mystique is quintessentially French in style and sound colour, with its sweeping lines, constantly shifting metres, and an emphasis on beauty and elegance, elements first established in the early work *Fantaisie-lied*. Its sound world is similar to the slow movement of Bloch’s *Piano Quintet no. 1* (1923), Bartok’s *Sonata for Violin and Piano no. 2* (1922), and also to the violin writing of Szymanowski.¹⁷³ Heifetz’s 1955 recording of *Poème Mystique* remains one of the benchmark recordings of this ethereal yet demanding work.¹⁷⁴

Written as one continuous movement, *Poème Mystique* is constructed in three main contrasting sections, A B A. The opening A section is dominated by a *tranquillo* theme of rising and falling fourths and fifths, often in triplets (Ex. 35). Most often presented in E or B major, this intervallic theme covers a wide range, often spanning three octaves within one phrase. The violin line repeatedly reaches to greater heights, keeping the violinist’s left hand in high positions for the vast majority of the work. This can be physically taxing and requires an immense attention to detail and bow control to maintain a sweetness of tone. A flautando bow stroke can be used to great effect in such *tranquillo* passages. Keeping in line with Bloch’s use of expressive fingerings, as discussed in the previous chapter, a natural E harmonic was chosen for the recording presented here, as it was found to enhance the ethereal quality and colour of the phrase (Ex. 35, CD 3 track 4, 0:00, 19:20).

¹⁷⁰ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 64.

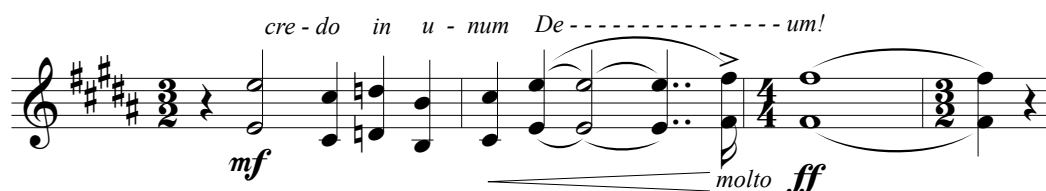
¹⁷¹ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 64.

¹⁷² David Kushner, “Ernest Bloch: The Cleveland Years (1920-25),” *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online*, 8/2: 178.

¹⁷³ Such as the *Violin Concerto* no. 1 Op. 35 of 1916.

¹⁷⁴ Jascha Heifetz, violin performance of “*Poème Mystique*,” by Ernest Bloch, recorded December 16, 1955, with Brooks Smith, on *The Heifetz Collection Volume 8*, RCA Victor Gold Seal 61739, 2011, 2 compact disks.

[sic] character, somewhat related to similar expressions in my “jewish” [sic] works ... but ... it turns to the *Credo* of the Gregorian chant ... and, later (No.17), to the *Gloria* of the mass *Kyrie fons bonitatis*, which I used partially ... but faithfully including even the marvelous *Amen* ... ”¹⁷⁵



Ex. 37 Bloch *Poème Mystique*, violin, measures 210-223

The final A section returns to the original *tranquillo* theme, before building momentum toward a final passage of “rapture and ecstasy”.¹⁷⁶ In Alex Cohen’s words, “... the work ends on a triumphant exclamation of Yea!”¹⁷⁷ (CD 3 track 4, 22:53).

Throughout *Poème Mystique*, accompanying figures feature extensive arpeggiated and tremolo passages in both violin and piano parts, similar to the *Sonata no. 1*. Raditz described how this “abundance of elaborate arpeggiated accompaniments, violin and piano tremolos, and repeated-chord figures, all within a wide melodic and dynamic range, tend to give this work an orchestral, rather than chamber music, quality”.¹⁷⁸ Such passages can pose challenges in performance, as Bloch juxtaposes time signatures within the rapidly flowing lines. Great care must be taken to align the two parts in passages such as Ex. 38 (CD 3 track 4, 1:00).

¹⁷⁵ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Rafael Druian and John Simms, n.d., Mercury LP MG50095, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, liner notes.

¹⁷⁶ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 58.

¹⁷⁷ Alex Cohen, “Three Concerts of Chamber Music by Ernest Bloch,” *Ernest Bloch Society* (1937), 11.

¹⁷⁸ Raditz, 185.



Ex. 38 Bloch *Poème Mystique*, score, measures 12-15

4.3.1 Manuscript Observations

The handwritten sketches and manuscripts of this work, kept in the Library of Congress, reveal many enlightening points. *Poème Mystique* was originally conceived as ‘*Utopia, Poem for Violin and Piano*’, with the marking ‘(enchanted garden)’ on a draft of the opening theme (Figure 5).¹⁷⁹ The original title page contains the sub-heading: ‘*As a complement to the Sonata - and to be played after it*’ (Figure 4). Clearly, Bloch intended the two *Sonatas* to be performed as a pair, taking the audience on an epic journey. Yet, this instruction is omitted in the published edition. Following Bloch’s original instruction, CD 3 of this study presents the two *Sonatas* in sequence, thus representing the duality of these paired compositions: the first *Sonata* representing ‘the world as it is’, and *Poème Mystique* offering Bloch’s musical interpretation of “the world as it should be: the world of which we dream; a work full of idealism, faith, fervor, hope, where

¹⁷⁹ Sketches and manuscripts are kept in the LOC: Library of Congress, *Ernest Bloch Collection*, 1988. Accessed May 17, 2014, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/ernest-bloch/>.

Jewish themes go side by side with the Credo and the Gloria of the Gregorian Chant".¹⁸⁰

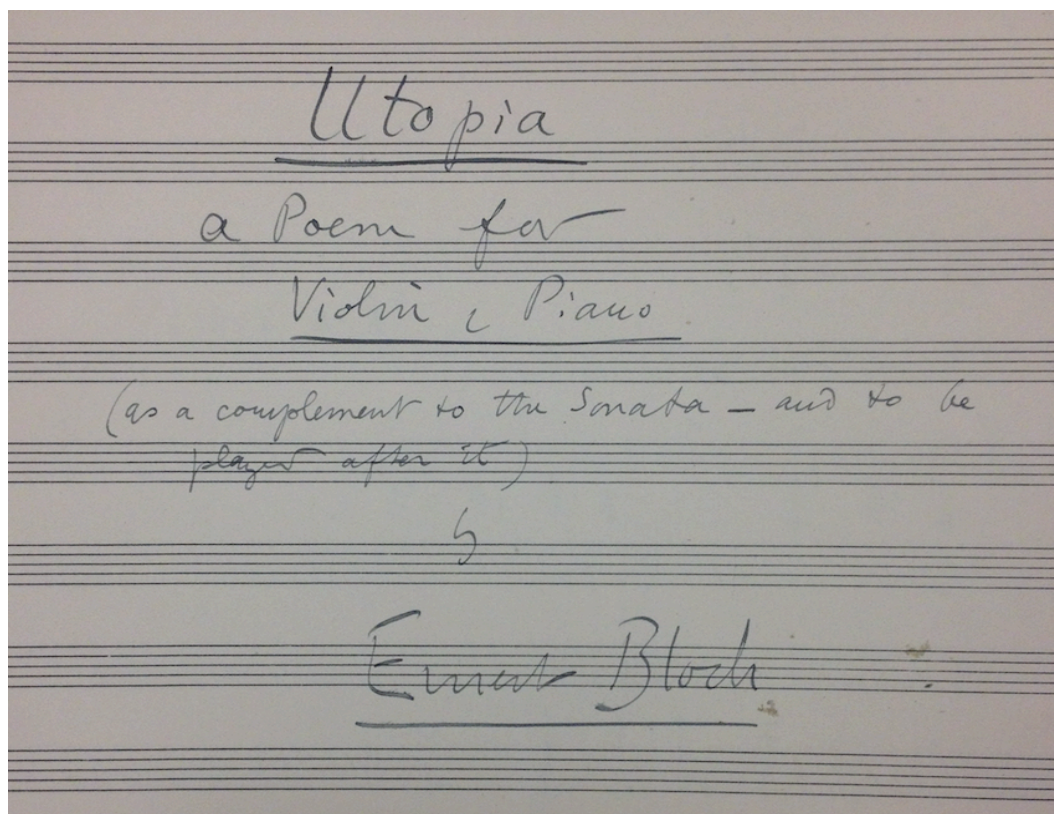


Figure 5. Bloch *Poème Mystique*, manuscript cover page

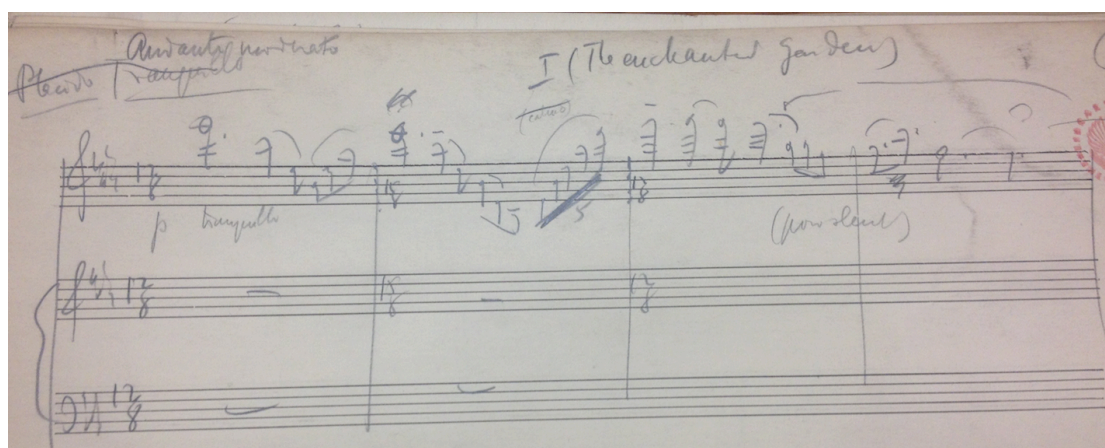


Figure 6. Bloch *Poème Mystique*, manuscript sketch

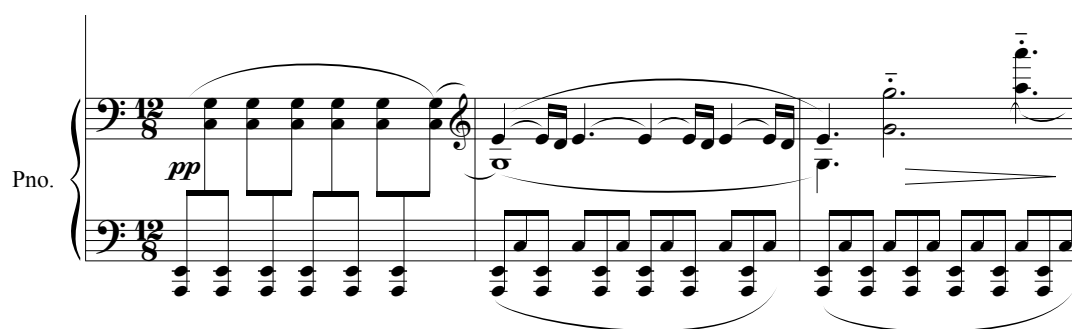
¹⁸⁰ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

After Bloch's death, Suzanne Bloch found eight pages of changes to *Poème Mystique*, including extensive cuts to the excessive tremolo sections.¹⁸¹ Evidence of these pages was sought for inclusion in this study, without success.

4.4 *Nuit Exotique* (1924), dedicated to Joseph Szigeti

CD 1 track 4

Nuit Exotique was written during Bloch's compositionally productive time in Santa Fe. Over a six-week period he wrote *Poème Mystique*, *Nuit Exotique*, *In the Mountains*, *Meditation Hebraïque*, *Three Jewish Pieces* and a draft of a *Suite* that would later become the *Concerto Grosso no. 1*. *Nuit Exotique* is one of several night-themed works written during this period. Others include *In the Mountains* for string quartet (1924) and *In the Night* for solo piano (1922). *Nuit Exotique* is a lyrical and 'sensual'¹⁸² one-movement work, and is the longest and most harmonically and structurally complex of the shorter works for violin and piano in this study. Written primarily in an impressionistic style, it contains no traceable Jewish elements. The sound world of *Nuit Exotique* is similar to *Fantaisie-lied* and *Poème Mystique*, with long flowing lines and Szymanovskian colours in abundance. Accompanying figures also share similarities with *Fantaisie-lied* and *Poème Mystique*, with extensive use of rising and falling arpeggiated triplet and sextuplet figures, and repeated note patterns that create a shimmering effect (Ex. 39, CD 1 track 4, 0:00, 1:29).

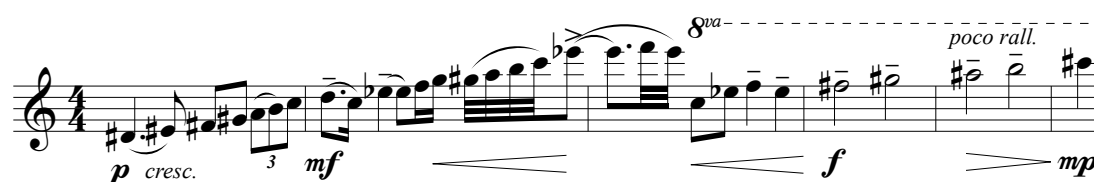


Ex. 39 Bloch *Nuit Exotique*, piano, measures 1-3

¹⁸¹ See Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 64.

¹⁸² Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

Like *Mélodie*, *Nuit Exotique* is in ternary form, with key thematic material alternating between long, gently-moving lines and more active rhythmic motifs. Constantly shifting metres – between duple and triple time – give *Nuit Exotique* simultaneously a sense of fluidity and instability. The melodic line often moves in unexpected directions, such as in measure 42 and later in measure 125, where Bloch pulls back the dynamic and drama at the climax point of an ascending phrase. This passage calls for sudden and extreme contrast in dynamics (Ex. 40, CD 1 track 4, 2:01, 6:29).



Ex. 40 Bloch *Nuit Exotique*, violin, measures 38-42

Bloch employs unusual harmonies and scale patterns to evoke an exotic character in the work, including “a distinctive coloristic effect caused by the addition of tones a tritone away from the roots of otherwise simple harmonies”.¹⁸³ This evocative character can be enhanced in both A sections (beginning in measures 1 and 100 respectively) through the use of *sul tasto* colours and a *flautando* bow stroke. The chromatic nature of the violin line makes it an ideal setting for expressive fingerings and portamenti, as explored in the previous chapter (Ex. 41, CD 1 track 4, 0:15). A line of descending minor thirds, which is repeated throughout the work in varying registers, is a central exotic motif. To enhance the eerie quality of the line, this passage is played in the recording with minimal vibrato (Ex. 42, CD 1 track 4, 1:40, 2:54).

¹⁸³ Raditz, 99.



Ex. 41 Bloch *Nuit Exotique*, violin, measures 4-12, with suggested fingerings



Ex. 42 Bloch *Nuit Exotique*, violin, measures 29-31

The middle B section, by contrast, begins with a sharply articulated driving figure in the piano, referred to by Raditz as an “ostinato rhythmic accompaniment”,¹⁸⁴ before the violin enters with a short, snapped rhythmic motif. Here, Bloch uses numerous extended violin techniques to add contrast in colour and texture, including *col legno*, *sul ponticello*, muted passages, *pizzicato*, and harmonics (CD 1 track 4, 3:44-4:40). In his 1942 article for the *London Times*, Ernest Newman described Bloch’s melodic imagination and use of colours, stating:

... it is not a mere matter of the employment of ‘effects’ – harmonics, ponticello sounds, the wide distancing of tones, and so on – that have been plentifully employed already, but of these colours coming into being as the natural, sole means of realising the composer’s vision.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Raditz, 101.

¹⁸⁵ Ernest Newman, “Imagination and Colour in Bloch,” *The London Times*, January 11, 1942, 2.

4.4.1 Dedication

Bloch dedicated *Nuit Exotique* to the virtuoso violinist, Joseph Szigeti, whose playing Bloch admired deeply. The two met in 1910, when Szigeti was 17 years old. Bloch engaged him as soloist with the Orchestra of the City of Lausanne, and from there, "... a deep friendship grew between the two men which lasted until Bloch's death".¹⁸⁶ Suzanne Bloch recalls, "Bloch and his wife would often reminisce about that youth – how marvelously he played, how beautiful he was, how shy and modest".¹⁸⁷ In his memoirs, Szigeti conjectured "... No doubt the material of this Exotic Night issued from that sketchbook of Bloch's which is devoted entirely to exotic fragments, a sketchbook often spoken of by his entourage, but never seen by any of us, which is as it should be."¹⁸⁸ Szigeti went on to become a champion of Bloch's music, performing many debut concerts of his violin works around Europe. Bloch dedicated his *Violin Concerto* to Szigeti, whose historical recording of the work is an invaluable resource for aspiring performers of the *Concerto*.¹⁸⁹

Nuit Exotique is the last of Bloch's violin works written during his 'Cleveland Period'. Kushner describes this period as follows:

The variety of works composed during the Cleveland years informs us of the changing musical environment of the time and of the influences that impacted upon, and, as importantly, did not impact upon Bloch. Exoticism, including occasional use of quarter tones, mixed with neo-classical formal ingredients, are the paramount imprints of his thinking of that period, while a residue of his earlier Hebraic stamp remains, as it did throughout his life. The music of the Second Viennese School, however, seems to have found general disdain and disrespect.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 82.

¹⁸⁷ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 82.

¹⁸⁸ Szigeti, *With String Attached*, 123.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Szigeti, violin performance of "Violin Concerto," by Ernest Bloch, recorded March 22-23, 1939, with the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra, conducted by Charles Munch, on *Great Violinists – Szigeti*, Naxos 8.110973, 2003, 1 compact disk.

¹⁹⁰ David Kushner, "Ernest Bloch: The Cleveland Years (1920-25)," *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online*, 8/2: 187.

4.5 Abodah (1928), dedicated to Yehudi Menuhin

CD 2 track 4

In 1928 Bloch heard the young violin prodigy Yehudi Menuhin perform at an intimate gathering in San Francisco. Menuhin played Bloch's *Nigun*, and Bloch was so touched and impressed – “it was as if I was *reborn*”¹⁹¹ – that he felt compelled to write a piece for the young virtuoso. In December of the same year, Menuhin premiered the new work *Abodah*, accompanied by Louis Persinger, an important musical figure in Menuhin's early years.¹⁹² He described the experience of meeting Bloch for the first time and the importance of having *Abodah* written for him:

... (Bloch) was a most extraordinary man who fell out of every average description ... He couldn't have been kinder to me ... he composed and dedicated, in fact, the first piece that was ever dedicated to me ... 'Abodah' – yes, I still have the manuscript and I felt proud and so important to think the great composer had dedicated a piece to me. I was only six or seven at the time, so it was one of the greatest events of my life which I shall never forget.¹⁹³

This was the beginning of a long collaborative relationship between Bloch and Menuhin that positively influenced both their lives and the musical identity of San Francisco. Their artistic presence and avowed love of San Francisco had a unifying effect on the city, and engendered a sense of growing pride and place in the greater American musical scene. *Abodah* came at a pivotal time in the city's cultural renaissance and the young Menuhin's launch into the public spotlight,

¹⁹¹ Leta E. Miller, *Music and Politics in San Francisco: From the 1906 Quake to the Second World War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

¹⁹² “I shall never forget when, as a boy of eight soon after my debut in San Francisco, he rang the front door bell of my parents' house one morning and, to my delight and wonder, presented me with the still damp hand-written score of the 'Abodah' – or 'Sacred Toil' – dedicated to me; an appropriate baptism for a lifetime of music-making.” Unpublished document written by Menuhin kept in the Foyle Menuhin Archives at the Royal Academy of Music in London: <https://www.ram.ac.uk/museum/collections/collections-highlights/performers-collections-and-archives/foyle-menuhin-archive>

¹⁹³ Transcript of interview with Yehudi Menuhin by Suzanne Bloch, 1968 (Bloch Collection, LOC).

symbolising both the lifelong friendship of these two musical giants, and their place in San Francisco's musical history.¹⁹⁴

Abodah was written during the same period in which Bloch produced several large-scale works, such as *America: An Epic Rhapsody* (1926), the Symphonic Poem *Helvetia* (1929), and with his thoughts already turned toward one of his largest musical undertakings, the *Sacred Service* (1933). Kushner writes, "Amid the large-scaled national efforts, an intimate Hebrew expression, *Abodah*, was written,"¹⁹⁵ and again, "a miniature prelude, perhaps, to the gigantic challenge that he now faced as a composer and as a Jew."¹⁹⁶

For some time Bloch had been collecting and cataloguing traditional Jewish melodies in a book he titled *Chant Juifs*. These were intended for a biblical opera, based on the story of Jezebel. Sadly, it was never completed.¹⁹⁷ Much of the collected material, however, found its way into other works, including *Abodah*.¹⁹⁸

Abodah, which means *God's Worship*, is subtitled 'A Yom Kippur Melody'. Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement, is a holy day in Judaism in which atonement and repentance are expressed through fasting and intensive prayer. For Bloch's version of *Abodah*, he chose a melody from "... a traditional Eastern European Ashkenazi synagogal chant, *Vehakkohanim*, rendered by the cantor during the 'Musaf' ('Additional') Service in the early afternoon on the Day of Atonement – the most solemn festival in the Jewish calendar."¹⁹⁹ Knapp describes the 20 basic motifs within this chant, from which Bloch selected "certain ascending and descending phrases in the *Ahava Rabba* mode (akin to the

¹⁹⁴ *Abodah* also represented a shared voice between the musicians, and offered a chance for Menuhin to explore his Jewish roots through music. He wrote. " ... as I had been steeped in the Chassidic songs my father sang so feelingly to me as a child, I found the same voice in all he [Bloch] wrote." Unpublished document written by Menuhin kept in the Foyle Menuhin Archives.

¹⁹⁵ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 78.

¹⁹⁶ David Kushner, "Religious Ambiguity in the Works of Ernest Bloch," *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* (2004): 6.

¹⁹⁷ Sketches kept in the LOC: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003561022/>.

¹⁹⁸ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

¹⁹⁹ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

Arabic *Maqam Hijjaz*, or the harmonic minor on the fifth degree) for special attention.”²⁰⁰

mf Quasi Fantasia.

We - ha - ko - ha - nim we - ha - 'am... ha - 'o - me -
Now the priest - ly ranks and the pro - - ple then stand - -

dim... ba - 'a - za - - rah. Ah!... ah!...
ing... in the Tem - ple court. Ah!... ah!...

keshe - ha - yu sho - me - 'im...
at the mo - ment they heard..

piangendo. ah!... ah!... et ha -
ah!... ah!... the dread

shem.... ha - nik - bad... weha - no - ra... me - fo -
Name,... in its splen - - - dor re - ver - - - ed, pro -

rash... ah!... ah!...
noun - - - ced, ah!... ah!...

mf ah!... ah!... ah!... ah!...
ah!... ah!... ah!... ah!...

mf yo - ze mip - pi - ko - hen ga - dol bik - du - shab, u - be -
from out the mouth of the High Priest in ho - ly aice and in

Ex. 43 Traditional Abodah Chant²⁰¹

IV

mf

Ex. 44 Bloch *Abodah*, violin, measures 7-10

²⁰⁰ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Sonatas*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, liner notes.

²⁰¹ Francis L. Cohen, "Abodah, Music of," in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Jewish Encyclopedia Online), accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/347-abodah-music-of>.

In Bloch's *Abodah*, the violin and at times the piano take on the role of the cantor, or hazan. In the transference from voice to violin, Bloch altered the range and structure of the original chant to allow the expressive capabilities of the instrument to communicate the importance of Yom Kippur and to convey the full gamut of human emotions:

Among the northern Jews it was the function of the hazan not merely to lead the liturgical song of the congregation, but rather, by his singing, to interpret and elucidate the liturgy to the congregation. Even in medieval times the cantors were inspired by a subconscious sentiment of this kind, to voice in the 'Abodah' all of Israel's longing for rest and liberty; and at times they would approach to the expression of sublimest emotion.²⁰²

It falls to the violinist to find this expressive cantorial voice when playing *Abodah*. In Raditz's words:

The key element in cantorial style is free improvisation, encompassing a wide range of moods and feelings. When this style of writing is employed by the composer, the performer, by Jewish tradition, has an even greater latitude of interpretation than is revealed by the composer's markings.²⁰³

Bloch indicates this expressive style with extensive dynamic and tempo fluctuations, extended melodic range, and double-stops at expressive climax points (CD 2 track 4, 4:04). Dramatic pauses, cadenza-like passages, and floral melodic lines are accompanied by a relatively sparse chordal accompaniment.²⁰⁴

Abodah is an ideal work to incorporate some of the expressive performance elements discussed in Chapter 2. Bloch's metronome marking (crotchet = about 63) suggests a level of tempo flexibility. There is a rhythmic freedom within the work, suggestive of the natural emotive nature and movement of the human voice. Bloch's instruction to the Flonzaley Quartet, "Don't fear an 'excess' of

²⁰² Francis L. Cohen, "Abodah, Music of," in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Jewish Encyclopedia Online), accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/347-abodah-music-of>.

²⁰³ Raditz, 27.

²⁰⁴ Raditz, 32.

emotion”²⁰⁵ seems applicable to *Abodah*. In the search for an ‘excess’ of emotion and vast expressive range, the recording of *Abodah* presented in this study incorporates a multitude of colours and bowing techniques, with added portamenti where it was felt the voice might naturally do so (CD 2 track 4, 0:29, 3:05). Certain passages seemed to benefit from a *sul tasto* approach to the string (CD 2 track 4, 3:18), whereas others required a more concentrated and focused attack, with the bow placed close to the bridge (CD 2 track 4, 1:10). Care was taken to avoid certain ‘violinistic’ techniques, such as excessive flautando bow strokes, that would distract from the primary aim of emulating the call of the cantor on this most solemn holy day of the Jewish year.

Yehudi Menuhin’s 1939 recording of the work,²⁰⁶ arguably one of his best recordings, is a crucial resource for any performer wishing to capture the essence of this historically important work.²⁰⁷

4.6 Solo Suites (1958), dedicated to Yehudi Menuhin

CD 2 tracks 1 and 5

“Between April 1956 and January 1957, Bloch, now seriously ill with cancer, turned to the purest mode of musical expression, works for a single instrument unaccompanied”.²⁰⁸ The result was three *Suites* for solo cello, two of which were dedicated to the cellist Zara Nelsova. One year later, Bloch completed a work he titled *Two Last Poems (Maybe...)* (1958). The composer was clearly aware that his days were limited and that this could be his final work, *maybe...*

Bloch in fact went on to write three more works:

When Bloch after completing his ‘Last Two Poems’ added to the title of his manuscript the prosaic term ‘maybe’ carefully putting three dots after, he

²⁰⁵ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 37.

²⁰⁶ Ernest Bloch, *Abodah*, Yehudi Menuhin, YouTube video, 4:59, recorded March 14, 1939, posted by Daniel Kurganov, Violinist, September 6, 2009, accessed February 14, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Keac2o-GAZQ>

²⁰⁷ A copy of Bloch’s original handwritten manuscript of *Abodah* can be found in the Foyle Menuhin Archives at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

²⁰⁸ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 134.

realized that these dots were symbolic of the three works he would write in his remaining lifetime.²⁰⁹

Shortly after completing the *Two Last Poems*, Bloch received a visit from Diana and Yehudi Menuhin. After seeing Bloch's solo cello *Suites*, Menuhin was inspired to commission a similar work for solo violin.²¹⁰ Despite illness and resultant interruption, Bloch completed the *Suite no. 1* for solo violin on April 17th, 1958.²¹¹ When Menuhin sent a generous check in payment, Bloch was deeply touched and in "gratitude and sincere affection"²¹² soon began writing a second *Solo Suite*, which he completed on July 21st, 1958.²¹³

These *Solo Suites* were not, in fact, Bloch's first attempt at writing for solo violin. In Szigeti's memoirs he recounts, "When I saw Bloch, soon after the outbreak of World War II, at his hotel overlooking Central Park, he picked up his violin ... and showed me fragments of a projected 'Symphony for Violin Alone.'²¹⁴ Sadly, this work never eventuated, but it is possible that some musical material is shared between this earlier effort and the completed *Suites*.

The *Solo Suites* present a new compositional voice, entirely different from Bloch's previous violin works. According to Suzanne Bloch:

Though he continued as ever to express his innermost feelings, the aspirations of man in his struggles and joys, his idiom became more detached, abstract and impersonal. The 'elan vital' was always there, but with the last years came a sense of acceptance and resignation, a wisdom profound and all encompassing.²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 100.

²¹⁰ A letter dated January 16th 1957 from Bloch to Menuhin, kept in the Foyle Menuhin Archives, suggests that Menuhin had already asked Bloch to write a solo violin work before Bloch had completed the solo cello *Suites*.

²¹¹ In a letter dated January 24th 1958 (Foyle Menuhin Archives), Bloch wrote to Menuhin of his completion of *Two Last Poems*, his ongoing work on the *Suite no. 1*, and of his desire (health willing) to write a work for Yehudi and Hephzibah Menuhin. Sadly, this work was never realised.

²¹² Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 101.

²¹³ In a letter dated April 17th 1958 (Foyle Menuhin Archive), Bloch offers to write a second *Suite*, dependent upon Menuhin's approval of the first classical style *Suite*.

²¹⁴ Szigeti, *With String Attached*, 121.

²¹⁵ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Works of Ernest Bloch*, with Hyman Bress and Charles Reiner, liner notes.

During the period of their composition, Bloch was immersed in a study of Bach, taking time each day during his ritual walk to write out fugues from memory.²¹⁶ Bach's influence and Bloch's leaning toward formal structures are present in the *Solo Suites*, which Kushner describes as, "The need for order amid a world of disruption, and the familiar musical truths of ages past ... absolutism and classical form are to be the musical fount from which the musician would drink during the creation of his final musical testaments to the word."²¹⁷ Robert Strassburg believed this new compositional voice represented Bloch "... at the height of his powers."²¹⁸ He describes the *Suites* as follows:

To a remarkable degree they succeed in emulating the never-ending flow of inspiration found in the Bach solo sonatas and partitas. What is projected is a subtle and impressive conception of tonality and construction, a mystical symbolism of expression that is hardly penetrated by words, but whose presence is felt as one listens.²¹⁹

The *Suites* also reflect the influence of solo violin writings from some of Bloch's contemporaries, most notably Hindemith's three *Sonatas for Solo Violin* (1917-1924), Nielson's *Prelude, Theme and Variations Op. 48* (1923) and *Preludio e Presto Op. 52* (1928), Ysaÿe's *Six Sonatas for Solo Violin Op. 27* (1923), and Bartok's *Sonata for Solo Violin Sz. 117* (1944). Bartok's *Solo Sonata*, directly inspired by Bach, was similarly commissioned by and dedicated to Yehudi Menuhin. Interestingly, both Bloch and Bartok were unwell and in their final days when composing these impressive solo works for Menuhin, and the violinist collaborated closely on both composers' scores. Menuhin's suggested alterations to Bloch's *Suites*, including alternative endings to both scores, can be found in the

²¹⁶ Pianist Sophia Melvin also described Bloch's use of Bach-like voicing techniques. She recalled how he memorised and analysed the fugues from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, using colored pencil to highlight motivic relationships.

Sophia Melvin, "Recollection of Ernest Bloch," *Clavier*, vol. 19 (1980): 32.

²¹⁷ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 112.

²¹⁸ Strassburg, *Voice in the Wilderness*, 97.

²¹⁹ Strassburg, *Voice in the Wilderness*, 97.

manuscript collection kept in the Foyle Menuhin Archive at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

When asked about his compositional metamorphosis in later years, Bloch wrote:

It is true that works written 50 years ago and recent works of mine are different. But not quite consciously. At 75, the psyche-physiology of a human being is different from that of a man of 12. (Alas!) My present works probably less subjective than those I wrote around 1912-16 (Quartet No. 1, my greatest, I feel). They are, perhaps, now more impersonal, more objective, perhaps. After all – it all originates from the same individual – a continuation...(and I hope not a deterioration! But I am not so sure...).²²⁰

The *Suite no. 1* is in four main connected movements. The opening *Prelude* is improvisatory in style, full of drama and rhapsodic in character. A similar style can be found in the cadenza of Bloch's *Violin Concerto* (1938). The second movement, *Andante Tranquillo*, is a gently moving interlude with a searching quality as it interweaves tonality and atonality. The next three sections, *Allegro*, *Andante* and *Allegro Energico*, are played without pause. The *Allegro*, according to Knapp, "... is especially Bachian in its string crossing and chordal writing",²²¹ (Ex. 45, CD 2 track 1, 5:30).

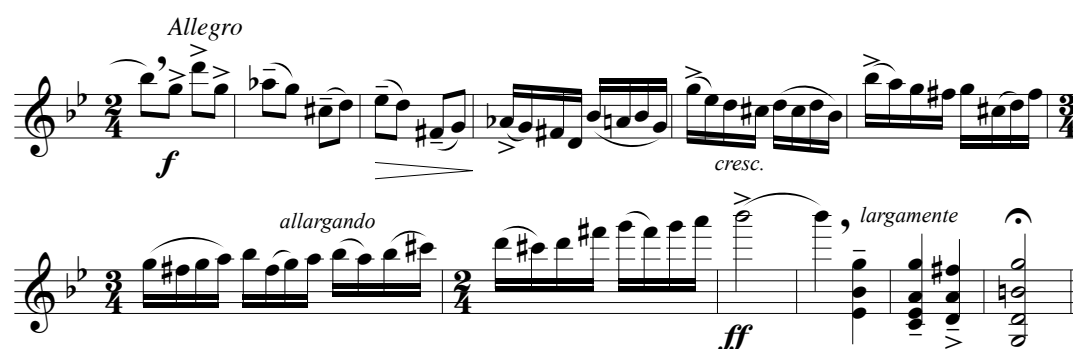


Ex. 45 Bloch *Suite no. 1*, Allegro, measures 16-21

²²⁰ Olin Downes, "A Great Composer at 75", *The New York Times*, July 24, 1955, 7.

²²¹ Ernest Bloch, *Bloch and Ben-Haim: Violin Music*, with Hagai Shaham and Arnon Erez, recorded May, 2006, Hyperion CDA67571, 2007, 1 compact disk, liner notes.

The short *Andante* in D minor is calm and reflective (CD 2 track 1, 6:47), before the *Allegro Energico* takes off with rhythmically driven force. This vigorous and strongly accented G minor finale references motivic material from previous movements, including the opening *Prelude*. A final *Allegro* section then propels the work toward a tierce picardi cadence in G major (Ex. 46, CD 2 track 1 9:55).



Ex. 46 Bloch *Suite no. 1*, *Allegro energico*, measures 67-78

The *Suite no. 2* is larger and more harmonically complex. Like the first *Suite*, it is in four connected movements: *Energico deciso*, *Moderato*, *Andante* and *Allegro molto*. Again, the opening movement is improvisatory in style, but more rhythmically driven than the opening movement of the first *Suite*. The *Moderato*, with its rising and falling triplet figures, has a gentle gigue-like quality,²²² moving between 9/8 and 6/8 metres (Ex. 47, CD 2 track 5, 3:26).



Ex. 47 Bloch *Suite no. 2*, *Moderato*, measures 1-4

A short middle section in 2/4 is rhythmically active and reminiscent of themes from the opening movement (CD 2 track 5, 5:15). The *Andante* that follows is calm and lyrical (CD 2 track 5, 6:28), ending with a short *deciso* interlude

²²² Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 138.

readying the mood for the *Allegro molto*. This final movement is a *molto perpetuo* of running semiquavers, concluding with a dramatic build up and descending arpeggio in A minor (Ex. 48, CD 2 track 5, 11:55).



Ex. 48 Bloch *Suite no. 2*, Allegro Molto, measures 325-331

4.6.1 Performance

The *Solo Suites* demonstrate Bloch's intimate knowledge of the violin, yet are more technically demanding than many of his earlier works. Challenges include: extended passages of double stops (CD 2 track 1, 8:39); chordal writing (CD 2 track 1, 6:48, CD 2 track 5, 1:07); complex melodic movement (CD 2 track 1, 2:53); and rapid semiquaver runs (CD 2 track 5, 9:14). The greatest challenge, however, comes in reconciling the multiplicity of musical ideas within Bloch's new musical voice. There is a formality in the structure of the *Suites* that demands a level of emotional restraint in performance, similar to that required by Bach's works for solo instruments that inspired these final compositions by Bloch. Both *Suites* do, however, contain moments of drama and rhapsody reminiscent of Bloch's earlier style. These sections, such as the opening *Prelude* of the first *Suite* (CD 2 track 1, 0:00), can be enhanced by a sense of rhythmic and tempo flexibility, and the expressive fingerings as discussed in detail in Chapter 2.1.3. These techniques must, however, be used consciously and somewhat sparingly, because surrounding these more expressive moments is a clear and concise structure that requires precision and clarity in approach. Due to the neo-baroque style of the works, a reduced use of vibrato can be employed to great effect, leaving more scope for contrast in right hand articulation. The *Solo Suites* are compact expressions of Bloch's later style, brimming with a multitude of

musical ideas, motifs, techniques, and colours. Understanding and honouring these variations will allow for a considered performance approach and interpretation of these complex works for solo violin.

Suzanne Bloch wrote of the *Suites*:

Bloch's affinity for the violin, his first instrument, can be seen in these two *Suites* which violinists have found wonderfully written for their instrument. But for those who expect music in the style of *Nigun*, they will be disappointed. This is the late Bloch, much less personal and closer to the classical masters of the past whom he loved so well.²²³

In Knapp's words, "Bloch has quelled unbridled passions and, in their stead, has created an objective and dispassionate manner of musical discourse".²²⁴ Menuhin described the *Suites* as "... beautifully written for the violin, expressive, melodic, classical in a manner that calls to mind latter-day Bach, and for that reason probably doomed to be underrated."²²⁵ He eventually recorded both *Suites*, but not until long after Bloch's death.²²⁶ He wrote to Suzanne in 1975, "I recorded your father's beautiful *Suites* a few weeks ago. I am very pleased and only wish that he could have heard them ... perhaps by now he has."²²⁷ He went on to attach the program notes he had written for the E.M.I. recording,²²⁸ in which he comments in part:

Ernest Bloch has always seemed to me to be one of the Seven Wonders ... Like Hercules, a world of ecstasy, of pain rested on his shoulders ... He was cast 'by the gods' in a superhuman mould – a prophetic scale of size and vision, of strength and vitality which exceeded the common mortal's ... The Bloch *Suites* are latter-day Bach Partitas; and he continually

²²³ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 101.

²²⁴ Kushner, *The Ernest Bloch Companion*, 132.

²²⁵ Yehudi Menuhin, *Unfinished Journey* (London: Methuen, 1976), 345.

²²⁶ *Suite no. 1* was premiered by Alberto Lysy in London in January 1959, and *Suite no. 2* was premiered by Yehudi Menuhin at Benjamin Britten's Festival in Aldeburgh in July 1959.

²²⁷ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 102.

²²⁸ Yehudi Menuhin, *Bloch: Deux Suites, Bartok: Sonata*, with Yehudi Menuhin, recorded January-February 1974 and April 1975, EMI 2C 069-02874, 1977, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm.

perfected his contrapuntal technique, doing elaborate and complex mental contrapuntal exercises in his voluminous notebooks. The two works which Bloch wrote for me are heart-searching, profoundly moving and noble expressions of a human soul and a human mind, which remained incredibly constant throughout his life.²²⁹

In her own program notes for the *Suites*, Suzanne wrote:

These unaccompanied Suites are in a way the culmination of Bloch's musical expression. He ended his life's work by writing for the simplest and yet most difficult and complex medium, music for a single instrument ... Bloch was seventy eight years old, facing death. How different he was from the nineteen year old youth facing life – yet, the miracle of the suite is the flow of youth through its pages, its never ending inspiration and vitality.²³⁰

Shortly after completing the *Violin Suites*, Bloch underwent surgery for cancer. "He was writing an unaccompanied Suite for Viola, when he was obliged to submit to the operation, survived it for ten months but never wrote another note of music."²³¹

²²⁹ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 102.

²³⁰ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Works of Ernest Bloch*, with Hyman Bress and Charles Reiner, liner notes.

²³¹ Ernest Bloch, *Violin Works of Ernest Bloch*, with Hyman Bress and Charles Reiner, liner notes.

Conclusion

This study presents a performer's investigation of Ernest Bloch's lesser-known violin repertoire, including seven of his published mature works and four unpublished early works. From Solo Suites to Sonatas, Bloch's violin compositions encompass an impressive range of styles, and yet most are relatively unknown. Through practice-led examination, this study provides new insight into these overlooked works, adding substantially to Bloch scholarship and performance. Three CD recordings, four new editions, and an exegesis that details the recording and editorial processes and outcomes, provide future performers and researchers with a concise catalogue of materials to guide further performance and scholarly investigation of the repertoire. Bloch's fingerings, found throughout the four early unpublished manuscripts, are explored as expressive tools for later works; and lost markings, rediscovered in the handwritten manuscripts, are brought into effect. Until now, for example, Bloch's marking to play the two *Violin Sonatas* as a pair, one directly after the other (as shown in Chapter 4.3.1), had been forgotten and omitted from published scores.

The scholarly interaction between critical analysis, editing, and performance resulted in four world-first editions and three CD recordings. The recordings of *Sérénade Morceau*, *Fantaisie-lied* and *Méditation* on CD 1 are all premieres, representing an interpretation of the works unaffected by a preexisting performance path. It is important to note that the recordings reflect the researcher's current interpretation and understanding of the repertoire. Fidelity and adherence to Bloch's artistic vision has remained the primary goal, in both the editorial and recording practices.

Commentary on the research, editing, and performance outcomes of the project follows Chapter 1, which presents a brief biographical introduction to Ernest Bloch's life and works. Chapter 2 discusses the resources and methodologies

relevant to the study, namely the process of editing the four early works. The relationship between composer, editor, and performer is a central research tool, which leads to an intimate and detailed knowledge of the scores and informs a range of performance choices. Chapters 3 and 4 examine Bloch's published and unpublished repertoire. Considerations of key musical material are explored alongside historical context and observations from the original manuscripts. As these chapters analyse the development of Bloch's style, they uncover links between the youthful and mature works.

The two-way influence of old and new, as seen through the juxtaposition of early and later works, is the crux of this research. Application of a cyclical research approach moved the process of investigation through levels of understanding that were continuously informed by the past, influenced by current knowledge and context, and refreshed by the incorporation of new knowledge. The methodological model, which supported this study's integrated approach as researcher, editor, and performer, stands as an example for future scholarly investigations of other composers and works.

The collected materials presented here are unified by the goal of shedding new light on the overlooked violin works by Bloch. It is not the intention of this study to prove that Bloch is the fourth great 'B' after Bach, Beethoven and Brahms.²³² Indeed, the music of Bloch has historically divided its audiences:

It is music that you are either for or against; it wins its composer fervent friends or implacable enemies. Even the latter dare not – for very good reason – deny this unique man's amazing technical mastery ... His creations are the creations of a man who dares to be himself whether the world approves or no.²³³

²³² "Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and...", *Ernest Bloch Legacy* (Portland, Oregon, 2007-2017), accessed March 20, 2014, http://www.ernestbloch.org/home.cfm?dir_cat=71547.

²³³ Bernard Rogers, "Ernest Bloch's String Quartet Called One of the Greatest Works of Our Day," *Musical America* (April 12, 1919): 9.

It remains a difficult task to evaluate Bloch in relation to his contemporaries. His music is both forward looking, yet rooted in the past; it is unique and challenging, yet familiar. Bloch was unaffected by “whether or not it would be accepted within the small and fickle frame of ‘success’.”²³⁴ He said of his work, “My sole desire and single effort has been to remain faithful to my Vision, to be True.”²³⁵ The compositional progression and diversity found within his violin repertoire, as seen through this study, attests to his immense skill as a composer. Bloch’s enduring search for an honest human expression through music resulted in an abundance of musical ideas and styles within his extensive works. Perhaps for some listeners the extreme range of emotions and contrast in styles is incomprehensible, albeit the mark of a great composer. As Hasting’s said:

... (Bloch’s) music cuts a little close to the bone; it probes too deep into what we feel, into our underlying sorrows and losses and frustrations; and ... (its) rejection illustrates a peculiarly American psychosis: the dread of inward understanding. By the various cliques of futurism he is dismissed as a “romantic” – a synonym, presumably for outmoded.²³⁶

Old fashioned or too modern, praised or criticised – Ernest Bloch is undeniably a unique and important musical figure, whose violin works are still as complex, relevant and moving as they were a century ago. This study furthers the case for these works of enduring quality to take their rightful place in the violin repertoire.

²³⁴ Suzanne Bloch, “Ernest Bloch,” *Musical America*, vol. 76 (February 15, 1956): 22-23, 192.

²³⁵ Olin Downes, “A Great Composer at 75”, in *ERNEST BLOCH: Creative Spirit, a Program Source Book*, ed. Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, 23.

²³⁶ John Hastings, “Ernest Bloch and Modern Music,” *Menorah Journal*, vol. 36 no. 2 (1948): 215.

Appendices

A. Notes on the *Baal Shem Suite* (1923)

Bloch's *Baal Shem, Three Pictures of Chassidic Life*, for violin and piano (later orchestrated in 1939), was written shortly after his first *Sonata no. 1* for violin and piano. The three-movement suite is a prime example of a work based on Jewish themes, but written outside of Bloch's 'Jewish Cycle'. Suzanne Bloch recalled her father composing the work for his friend and colleague, Andre de Ribaupierre, intentionally writing in a simpler and less serious style than the *Sonata*. Indeed, many of Bloch's friends disapproved of the work and thought he was letting his artistic standards slip. Suzanne recounts, "Bloch himself knew well that this *Suite* was of a totally different caliber to his other works ... he enjoyed telling the story of his visit to the office of Carl Fischer who was to be the publisher of the music. After he and Ribaupierre had finished playing the *Suite*, Carl Fischer got up excitedly, slapped Bloch on the back and exclaimed, 'Now, Bloch, you are improving and really getting somewhere'."²³⁷

The middle movement, *Nigun*, has become a staple in the violin repertoire.

²³⁷ Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *ERNEST BLOCH*, 61.

B. Jewish Music on the Classical Stage

Although only a relatively small part of his compositional life, the period of Bloch's 'Jewish cycle' had a huge impact on the development of his career and provided inspiration for many composers after him. According to Professor Marsha Bryan Edelman, the early 1900s was a time of:

... transition from compositions based upon pre-existing Jewish tunes to original works 'in the style of' traditional Jewish songs. This blurring of the line between 'real' Jewish music and music 'of interest to Jews' was an important development in its time. This enabled American Jewish composers ... to avoid making a distinction between 'Jewish' and 'general' music.²³⁸

One such composer was Bloch's contemporary, Lazar Weiner, a Yiddish specialist who was at the forefront of composition and arrangements of Yiddish art songs, and considered "a pivotal figure in American Jewish musical life".²³⁹ Two other notable composers, less known for their Jewish heritage and the influence it had on them, are Aaron Copland and Arnold Schoenberg. Although Copland made only one attempt to compose a 'Jewish' work, his piano trio *Vitebsk* (1928), he considered Bloch to be "a symbol of Jewish inspiration".²⁴⁰ Schoenberg made several attempts to explore and express his Judaism. As Edelman writes:

In his last years, as a clear response to his newfound Judaism, Schoenberg ... produced several important works with Jewish themes. *Kol Nidre* (1939) ... His 1945 *Prologues to the Book of Genesis* ... and his final works including settings of several psalms.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Marsha Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 149.

²³⁹ Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music*, 162.

²⁴⁰ Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 36.

²⁴¹ Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music*, 168

Leonard Bernstein, like Bloch, composed many works with 'Jewish' content, "demonstrating convincingly that music can have a decidedly 'Jewish' agenda while retaining its 'universal' appeal'."²⁴² Yet it was Bloch who was termed the "modern Hebrew prophet of music".²⁴³ According to Edelman, "Bloch's work helped set the stage for similarly oriented works by other composers of Jewish origin. Some of those musicians ultimately exceeded Bloch's renown, but none produced a comparable volume of 'Jewish' material".²⁴⁴

²⁴² Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music*, 183.

²⁴³ Strassburg, *Voice in the Wilderness*, 26.

²⁴⁴ Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music*, 166.

C. Photographs of Bloch from the San Francisco Conservatory Archives

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1. Ernest Bloch with students.

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2. Ernest Bloch with pipe and piano.

Photographs 1 and 2 obtained during research at the San Francisco Conservatory. Scanned images provided by the Conservatory archivist for research purposes only.

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